This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

3 3433 06826190 2

ZFL
Guthrie

THE

CHRISTIAN's GREAT INTEREST.

IN TWO PARTS.

PART I.

THE TRIAL OF A SAVING INTEREST IN CHRIST.

PART II.

THE WAY HOW TO ATTAIN IT.

BY THE REVEREND WILLIAM GUTHRIE,

LATE MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL AT FINWICK.

---

*Wherefore the rather, Brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure.....*2. PETER i. 10.

Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves: Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?....2. COR. xiii. 5.

*I am my Beloved's, and my beloved is mine.....*SONG vi. 3.

SALEM (N. Y.)

PRINTED BY DODD & RUMSEY.

1804.

Gratis

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
1410178
ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
R 1941 L

PREFACE.

READER,

MY deſign in detaining you with a preface, is not merely a recommendation of the following work; its character has been deſcribed by pens more capable than mine, and its real value aſſerted by names much more entitled to your confidence and reſpect. During the period of one hundred and fifty years the religious world have aſſigned it nearly the firſt rank among books of human compoſition, and its ſeal is impreſſed on the hearts of multitudes both ſinners and ſaints; to the former it has been effectual, through the grace of the Holy Ghoſt, for their converſion, to the latter for their greater eſtabliſhment and conſolation.

My deſign in addreſſing you is only to expoſtulate with you thankfully to receive and diligently to improve it. We learn from the ſacred oracles that ſome *have a form of godlineſs*, who are, notwithſtanding, deſtitute of its *living power*; that many will approach the Saviour at laſt *and knock, ſaying, Lord, Lord, open to us; we have eat and drunk in thy preſence and thou haſt taught in our ſtreets*; to whom he will reply, *I know you not whence you are: depart from me all ye workers of iniquity.* In the following treatiſe thou mayeſt learn to which claſs of profeſſors thou belongeſt now, and in which thy doom may be expected at laſt. Here thy fears, thy joys, thy deſires, thy hopes are laid in the unerring balance of the ſanctuary and impartially weighed. This little volume, by a plain exhibition of divine truth to the underſtanding and by a powerful application of it to the heart, is eminently calculated to convince the careleſs of their danger, to inſtruct in the true method of ſalvation the ignorant and erroneous; to ſtrip the vain formaliſt of his ſelf-deceiving maſk; to anſwer the objections and allay the fears of the weak and the timid, to brighten the evidences of the doubting, and cheer with

the light of heaven the ſpiritual pilgrim, while he is travelling to his Father's houſe. Reader, peruſe it with all poſſible attention and impartially compare thine exerciſes with that divine ſtandard which it preſents, becauſe on *this Trial of a Saving Intereſt in Chriſt* thy ſoul is eternally concerned. If like *the fooliſh virgins*, thou haſt *only the lamp* of a profeſſion, better to diſcover the miſtake now while oil is flowing from Jeſus the Living Head, than hereafter, when all communication ſhall be ſuſpended and *he that is unjuſt ſhall be unjuſt ſtill;* if when *weighed in the balance thou art found wanting*, better to know it in time while the offers of reconciliation are repeated, than hereafter when the door of mercy ſhall be finally cloſed and the Lord God *ſhall ſwear in his wrath that thou ſhalt not enter into his reſt.*

Again, after the examination of thine eſtate has been impartially made, if thou art left without any comfortable aſſurance of an *Intereſt in Chriſt*, this treatiſe directs thee how to attain it; how to *make thy calling and election ſure*, by embracing Jeſus with his eternal redemption as tendered freely in the goſpel; a balm is here exhibited for thy diſeaſes however complicated; an open door is held forth to view by which thou mayeſt enter *the city of refuge* and be eternally ſecured, *from the avenger of blood;* Jeſus the friend of ſinners; Jeſus "whoſe ſacrifice is the ſoul's ranſom, whoſe righteouſneſs is the ſoul's raiment," whoſe conſolations are the ſoul's life and ſupport is clearly exhibited and indiſcriminately offered to every reader. The fountain of life is unſealed and its healing waters drawn forth and tendered to any perſon that is ſpiritually athirſt.

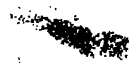
A few chriſtian friends in this and other places have united their contributions to publiſh and circulate thro' your ſettlements this precious treat. Receive it, brethren, as an unfeigned teſtimony of our ſympathy with you in your deſolate ſituation and our fervent concern for your eternal welfare. The preſent may, poſſibly, be the laſt ſervice of this nature which ſome of us ſhall ever have opportunity of rendering you, this conſider-

ation encreaſes our ſolicitude that the offering may not be coldly received or careleſsly improved. Although we are remote from many of you in local ſituation, we eſteem you our brethren by nature; we would long over you *in the bowels of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt*, and cheerfully *ſpend and be ſpent* that your ſouls might be ſaved in the terrible day of his coming. Should this mean of ſalvation which, through *the good hand of our God helping*, we are enabled to carry to your abodes be bleſſed for awakening any thoughtleſs reader or encouraging any weak and wavering reader, we ſhall conſider ourſelves rewarded ten thouſand fold; we ſhall conſider ourſelves unſpeakably honoured in being employed as inſtruments of bringing glory to Jeſus and furtherance *to your ſpiritual joy*. But on the other hand, ſhould it lay in your habitations diſpiſed or neglected, our ſouls muſt weep for you *in ſecret places*. We know that by ſounding the alarm we become guiltleſs of your blood *whether you hear or forbear*, but we are not ſatisfied barely with eſcaping ourſelves; we would willingly be inſtrumental in reſcuing you from deſtruction and behold you at laſt ſtanding *before the preſence of his glory with exceeding joy*. With theſe aſſurances of affection to your ſouls and ſolicitude for their eternal ſalvation we conclude *praying you in Chriſt's ſtead, be ye reconciled to God.*

Now, that our Lord Jeſus Chriſt himſelf and God even our Father which hath loved us and given us everlaſting conſolation and good hope through grace, may comfort your hearts and ſtabliſh you in every good word and work is, in the name of theſe your ſpiritual benefactors, the prayer of your unworthy ſervant,

ALEXANDER PROUDFIT.

SALEM, *January* 23, 1805.



INTRODUCTION.

SINCE there be so many people living under the ordinances, pretending, without ground, to a special interest in Christ, and to his favor and salvation, as is clear, "*Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you; depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*" "*Afterwards came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.*" "*Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.*" *And since many, who have good ground of claim to Christ are not esablished in the confidence of his favour, but remain in the dark, without comfort, hesitating concerning the reality of godliness in themselves, and speaking little to the commendation of religion to others, especially in the time of their straits, I shall speak a little to two things of the greatest concernment: The one is, How a person shall know if he hath a true and special interest in Christ, and whether he doth lay just claim to God's favour and salvation? The other is, In case a person fall short in the foresaid trial, what course he shall take for making sure God's friendship and salvation to himself?*

THE
TRIAL OF A SAVING INTEREST IN CHRIST.

PART I.

QUESTION....*How ſhall a Man know if he hath a true and ſpecial Intereſt in* CHRIST, *and whether he hath, or may lay claim juſtly to, God's favor and ſalvation?*

Chapter I.

A MAN'S INTEREST IN CHRIST MAY BE KNOWN.

SECTION I.

It is a matter of the higheſt importance, and is to be determined by Scripture.

BEFORE we ſpeak directly to the queſtion, we ſhall premiſe ſome things, to make way for the anſwer.

Firſt, That a man's intereſt in Chriſt, or his gracious ſtate, may be known, and that with more certainty than people do conjecture; yea, and the knowledge of it may be more eaſily attained unto than many do imagine:—for not only hath the Lord commanded men to know their intereſt in him, as a thing attainable, "Examine yourſelves whether ye be in the faith," "Give diligence to make your calling and election ſure;" but many of the ſaints have attained unto the clear perſuaſion of their intereſt in Chriſt, and in God as their own God. How often do they call him their *God* and their *portion?* and how perſuaded is Paul "that nothing can ſeparate him from the love of God?" Therefore the knowledge of a man's gracious ſtate is attainable.

And this knowledge of it, which may be attained, is no fancy and bare conceit, but it is moſt ſure; "Doubtleſs thou art our Father," ſaith the prophet, in the name of the church. It is clear thus: (1.) That can be no fancy, but a very ſure knowledge, which doth yield to a rational man comfort in moſt real ſtraits: but ſo doth this; "When the people ſpake of ſtoning David, he encouraged himſelf in the Lord his God." He ſaith there, "he will not be afraid of ten thouſands that riſe againſt him." Compare theſe words with that pſalm, "But thou, O Lord, art a ſhield for me: my glory, and the lifter up of mine head." "The Lord is my light, and my ſalvation, whom ſhall I fear? the Lord is the ſtrength of my life, of whom ſhall I be afraid? Tho' an hoſt ſhould encamp againſt me, my heart ſhall not fear: though war ſhould riſe againſt me, in this will I be confident." (2.) That is a ſure knowledge of a thing which maketh a wiſe merchant ſell all he hath that he may keep it ſure; that maketh a man forego children, lands, life, and ſuffer the ſpoiling of all joyfully: but ſo doth this. (3.) That muſt be a ſure and certain knowledge, and no fancy, whereupon a man voluntarily and freely doth adventure his ſoul when he is ſtepping into eternity, with this word in his mouth, "This is all my deſire:" but ſuch a knowledge is this.

And again, not only may a godly man come to the ſure knowledge of his gracious ſtate, but it is more eaſily attainable than many do apprehend: for ſuppoſing, what ſhall be afterwards proved, that a man may know the gracious work of God's Spirit in himſelf; if he will but argue rationally from thence, he ſhall be forced to conclude his interest in Chriſt, unleſs he deny clear Scripture truths. I ſhall only make uſe of one here, becauſe we are to ſpeak more directly to this afterwards. A godly man may argue thus, Whoſoever receiveth Chriſt are juſtly reputed the children of God, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the ſons of God;" but I have received Chriſt all the ways which the word there can import; for I pleaſe the de-

vice of ſalvation by Chriſt; I agree to the terms; I welcome the offer of Chriſt in all his offices, as a King to rule over me, a Prieſt to offer and intercede for me, a Prophet to teach me; I lay out my heart for him and towards him, reſting on him as I am able. What elſe can be meant by the word RECEIVING? Therefore may I ſay, and conclude plainly and warrantably, I am juſtly to reckon myſelf God's child according to the aforeſaid Scripture, which cannot fail.

The *Second* thing to be premiſed is, That a man be ſavingly in covenant with God is a matter of the higheſt importance; "It is his life;" and yet very few have or ſeek after a ſaving intereſt in the covenant, and many fooliſhly think they have ſuch a thing without any ſolid ground: "Few find, or walk, in the narrow way."—This ſhould alarm people to be ſerious about the matter, ſince it is of ſo great conſequence to be in Chriſt, and ſince there be but few that may lay juſt claim to him; and yet many do fooliſhly fancy an intereſt in him, who are deceived by a falſe confidence, as the *fooliſh virgins* do.

The *Third* thing to be premiſed is, Men muſt reſolve to be determined by Scripture in this matter of their intereſt in Chriſt. The Spirit ſpeaking in the Scripture is judge of all controverſies: "To the law and to the teſtimony; if they ſpeak not according to this word, it is becauſe there is no light in them;" and of this alſo, whether a man be ſavingly in covenant with God or not.—Therefore do not mock God whilſt you ſeem to ſearch after ſuch a thing. If we prove from Scripture, which is the uncontroverted rule, that you are gracious, and have ſtricken covenant ſavingly with God, then reſolve to grant ſo much, and to acquieſce in it: and if the contrary appear, let there be a determination of the controverſy, elſe you do but *mock* the Lord, and ſo "your bands ſhall be made ſtrong;" for "a jot of his word cannot fail:" Therefore ſeek *eye-ſalve* from Chriſt to judge of things according as the word of God ſhall diſcover them to be.

SECTION II.

Reaſons why ſo few come to the clear knowledge of their Intereſt in CHRIST.

THE *Fourth* thing to be premiſed is, Although the matter of a man's intereſt in Chriſt be of ſo great importance, and the way to attain to the knowledge of it ſo plainly held forth in the Scriptures, yet there be but few who reach the diſtinct knowledge of it. And that this may not diſcourage any perſon from attempting it, I ſhall hint ſome few reaſons why ſo few come to the clear knowledge of it; which will alſo prepare the way for what is to be ſpoken afterwards.

The *firſt* thing which doth hinder many from the knowledge of their intereſt in Chriſt, is their ignorance of ſome ſpecial principles of religion: as (1.) That it was free love in God's boſom, and nothing in man, that moved him to ſend a Saviour to perfect the work of redemption, "God ſo loved the world, that he gave his only begotton Son." Men are ſtill ſeeking ſome ground for that buſineſs in themſelves, which leads away from ſuitable and high apprehenſions of the firſt ſpring and riſe of God's covenant-favor to his people, which hath no reaſon, cauſe, or motive in us; and ſo they cannot come to the knowledge of their intereſt.

(2.) They are ignorant how that love doth effectually diſcover itſelf to a man's heart, ſo as he hath ground to lay claim to it, *viz.* That ordinarily it doth, 1*ſt*, diſcover his broken ſtate in himſelf, becauſe of ſin and corruption defiling the whole man, and any thing in him that might be called a righteouſneſs; "All theſe things are loſs and dung." 2*dly*, It diſcovereth Chriſt as the full and ſatisfying treaſure above all things; "The man finds a treaſure, for which with joy he ſelleth all."—3*dly*, It determineth the heart, and cauſeth it to approach unto a living God in the ordinances: "Bleſſed is the man whom thou chuſeſt, and cauſeſt to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts," and cauſeth

the heart to wait upon him, and him alone; "My ſoul, wait thou only upon God." Thus having dropped in the ſeed of God in the heart, and *formed Chriſt* there, the *heart* is changed and made *new* in the foreſaid work, and God's law is ſo ſtamped upon the heart in that change, that the whole yoke of Chriſt is commended to the man without exception; *the law* is acknowledged *good, holy, juſt, and ſpiritual.* Upon all which, from that new principle of life, there flow out acts of a new life, "faith worketh by love;" and the man becometh "a ſervant of righteouſneſs unto God," which doth eſpecially appear in the ſpirituality of worſhip; men then "ſerve God in ſpirit and truth; and in the newneſs of the ſpirit, and not in the oldneſs of the letter;" and tenderneſs in all manner of converſation; the man then "exerciſeth himſelf how to keep a conſcience void of offence towards God and towards men." Now this way doth the love of God diſcover itſelf unto man, and acteth on him, ſo as he hath ground of laying ſome good claim to it; ſo as he may juſtly think that the love which ſent a Saviour had reſpect to ſuch a man as hath found theſe things made out unto him. Surely ignorance in this doth hinder many from the knowledge of their intereſt in Chriſt; for if a man know not how God worketh with a perſon, ſo as he may juſtly lay claim to his love, which was from eternity, he will wander in the dark, and not come to the knowledge of an intereſt in him.

(3.) Many are alſo ignorant of this, that God alone is the hope of his people: he is called *the Hope of Iſrael;* although inherent qualifications are evidences of it, yet the ſtaying of the heart upon him as a full bleſſing and ſatisfying portion is faith; "the faith and hope muſt be in God;" and the only proper condition which giveth right to the ſaving bleſſings of the covenant;—"to him that worketh not, but believeth—faith is counted for righteouſneſs." Indeed, if any perſon take liberty here, and turn grace into wantonneſs, there is without doubt in ſo far a deluſion; ſince there "is mercy with him, upon condition that it conciliate fear to

him :" Yea, hardly can any man, who hath found the foreſaid expreſſions of God's love made out upon him, make a cloak of the covenant for ſinful liberty without ſome meaſure of a ſpiritual conflict; in this reſpect, "he that is born of God doth not ſin;" and, "he who doth ſo ſin hath not ſeen God;" I ſay, God is the hope of his people, and not their own holineſs. If they intend honeſty, and long ſeriouſly to be like unto him, many failings ſhould not weaken their hope and confidence, for it is in him "who changeth not;" "and if any man ſinneth, he hath an advocate." Now, when men place their hope in any other thing beſide the Lord, it is no wonder they be kept in a ſtaggering condition, according to the changes of the thing which they make the ground of their hope, ſince they give not to God the glory due to his name, and which he will not give to another.— "They who know thy name will put their truſt in thee," "My glory will I not give to another: I am the Lord, that is my name."

(4.) Many are ignorant of the different ways and degrees of God's working with his people, and this doth much darken their knowledge, and reflex acts of their intereſt in him. This ignorance doth run mainly on three heads. (1.) They are ignorant of the different degrees and ways of that law-work which ordinarily dealeth with men, and of the different ways how the Lord bringeth home people at firſt to Chriſt. They conſider not that the Jailor is not kept an hour in bondage; Paul is kept in ſuſpenſe three days, Zaccheus not one moment.— (2.) They are ignorant of, at leaſt they do not conſider, how different the degrees of ſanctification are in the ſaints, and the honorable appearings thereof before men in ſome; and the ſad blemiſhings thereof in others. Some are very blameleſs, and more free of groſs out-breakings, adorning their profeſſion much, as Job, *chap.* i. and Zacharias, *Luke* i. Theſe are ſaid to be "perfect and upright, fearing God, and eſchewing evil; righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameleſs:" others were ſubject to

very groſs and ſad evils, as Solomon, Aſa, &c. (3.) They are ignorant of the different communications of God's face, and expreſſions of his preſence. Some do walk much in the light of God's countenance, and are much in ſenſible fellowſhip with him, as David was; others are "all their days kept in bondage through fear of death." Surely the ignorance of the different ways of God's working and dealing with his people doth very much darken the knowledge of their intereſt in him, whilſt they uſually ſtint the Lord to one way of working, which he doth not keep, as we have ſhewed in the former examples.

The *ſecond* thing which doth darken men about their intereſt in Chriſt is, there is one thing or other wherein their heart in ſome reſpect doth condemn them, as dealing deceitfully and guilefully with God. It is not to be expected that theſe can come to clearneſs about their intereſt whoſe heart doth condemn them for keeping up ſome known tranſgreſſion againſt the Lord, which they will not let go, neither are uſing the means which they know to be appointed by God for delivering them from it: neither can theſe come to clearneſs who know ſome poſitive duty commanded them in their ſtations, which they deceitfully ſhift and ſhun, not cloſing cheerfully with it, or not willing to be led into it: theſe are alſo, in ſome reſpect, condemned of their own heart, as the former ſort; and in that caſe it is difficult to come to a diſtinct knowledge of their ſtate. "If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God." It is ſuppoſed there, that a ſelf-condemning heart maketh void a man's confidence proportionally before God.

I do not deny but that men may on good grounds plead an intereſt in Chriſt in the caſe of prevailing iniquity. "Iniquities prevail againſt me; as for our tranſgreſſions thou ſhalt purge them away." "I ſee another law in my members warring againſt the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of ſin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am, who ſhall deliver me from the body of this death! I thank God through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord. So then,

with the mind I myſelf ſerve the law of God, but with the fleſh the law of ſin." But it is hard to be attained, if at all attainable, when the heart is dealing deceitfully, and entertaining known guile in a particular: therefore let people clear themſelves of the particular which they know too well. It is the thing which doth meet them, marring their confidence and acceſs in all their approaches unto God; ſee *Judg.* x. 10, 13—the idolatries of the people are caſt up to them by the Lord, and their ſuit rejected thereupon. That which draweth away the heart firſt in the morning, and laſt at night, like "an oven heated at night, and it burneth as a flaming fire in the morning," ſpoken of the wicked, and taketh up their thoughts often on their bed; as it is ſaid of ſome, "He deviſeth miſchief upon his bed," &c. That which doth lead away the heart in time of religious duty ordinarily, and the remembrance of which hath power to enliven and quicken the ſpirits more than the remembrance of God, ſo as "their heart is after the heart of ſome deteſtable thing;" that which withſtandeth men when they would gripe the promiſe, as God caſteth up men's ſins to them who are meddling with his covenant; "What haſt thou to do to declare my ſtatutes, or that thou ſhouldſt take my covenant in thy mouth?" that is the thing which doth mar the knowledge of a gracious ſtate; let it go, and it will be more eaſy to reach the knowledge of an intereſt in Chriſt.

The *third* thing which hindereth the knowledge of an intereſt in Chriſt is, a ſpirit of ſloth and careleſs negligence in many. They complain that they know not whether they be in Chriſt or not: but as few take pains to be in him, ſo few take pains to try if they be in him. It is a work and buſineſs which cannot be done ſleeping, "Examine yourſelves whether ye be in the faith; prove your own ſelves: know ye not your own ſelves." The ſeveral words uſed there, viz. *Examine*, *prove*, *know*, —ſay that there is a labour in it; "diligence muſt be uſed to make our calling and election ſure." It is a buſineſs above fleſh and blood; the "holy anointing

which teacheth all things," muſt make us "know the things freely given us of God." Shall the Lord part a buſineſs of ſo great concernment, and not ſuch as "be inquired after to do it for men?" Be aſhamed, you who ſpend ſo much time in reading romances, in adorning your perſons, in hawking and hunting, in conſulting the law concerning your outward eſtate in the world, and it may be in worſe things than theſe; be aſhamed that you ſpend ſo little time in the ſearch of this, whether ye be an heir of glory or not? Whether you be in the way that leadeth to heaven, or that way which will land you in darkneſs for ever? You who judge this below you, and unworthy of your pains any part or minute of your time, it is like, in God's account, you have judged yourſelves *unworthy of everlaſting life*, ſo as you ſhall have no lot with God's people in this matter.

The *fourth* thing that doth darken the knowledge of an intereſt in Chriſt is, Men do not condeſcend upon what would ſatisfy them. They complain that God will not ſhew unto them what he is about to do with them, but cannot yet ſay they know what would ſatisfy concerning his purpoſe. This is a ſad thing. Shall we think theſe are ſerious who have never as yet pitched on what would ſatisfy them, nor are making earneſt inquiry after what ſhould ſatisfy? If the Lord had left us in the dark in that matter, we were leſs inexcuſable; but ſince the grounds of ſatisfaction, and the true marks of an intereſt in Chriſt, are ſo clear and frequent in ſcripture, and ſo "many things written, that our joy may be full," and "that thoſe who believe may know that they have eternal life," and ſince "he that believeth hath a witneſs of it in himſelf," none can pretend excuſe here. We may not here inſiſt to ſhow what may and ſhould ſatisfy concerning our intereſt, ſince we are to ſpeak directly to it afterwards.

The *fifth* thing that helpeth much to keep men in the dark concerning their intereſt in Chriſt is, they pitch upon ſome mutable grounds, which are not ſo appoſite proofs of the truth of an intereſt in Chriſt as of the com-

fortable ſtate of a triumphing ſoul ſailing before the wind, and marks, which I grant are precious in themſelves, and do make out an intereſt clearly where they are; but they are ſuch as without which an intereſt in Chriſt may be found be known alſo in a good meaſure. We ſhall touch a few of them.

1*ſt*, Some think that all who have a true intereſt in him are above the prevailing power of every ſin: but this is contrary to that of "Iniquities prevail againſt me; as for our tranſgreſſions thou ſhalt purge them away:" where we find that holy man laying juſt claim to pardon, in the caſe of prevailing iniquity; and that where "Paul thanketh God through Chriſt, as freed from the condemnation of the law, even whilſt a law in his members leadeth captive unto ſin."

2*dly*, Some think that all true ſaints have conſtantly acceſs unto God in prayer, and ſenſible returns of prayer at all times; but this is contrary to the many ſad exerciſes of his people, complaining often that they are not heard nor regarded of God, "How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord? For ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?" "My God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me? Why art thou ſo far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the day time, but thou heareſt not; and in the night-ſeaſon, and am not ſilent."

3*dly*, Some think that all who have any true intereſt in him have God witneſſing the ſame unto them by a high operation of that *witneſſing Spirit* of his, ſpoken of *Rom.* viii. 16. "The Spirit itſelf beareth witneſs with our ſpirit that we are the children of God;" whereof afterwards; and ſo they ſtill ſuſpect their own intereſt in Chriſt, becauſe of the want of this. But they do not remember that they muſt firſt believe and give credit to that "record which God hath given of the Son, that there is life enough in him" for men, and then look for the ſeal and witneſs of the Spirit; "in whom, after ye believed, ye were ſealed with that holy ſpirit of promiſe." As long as people hold faſt theſe principles, and the like,

they can hardly come to the knowledge of their gracious ſtate, which God hath warranted people to prove and clear up to themſelves, otherways than by theſe foreſaid things.

SECTION III.

Some miſtakes concerning an Intereſt in Chriſt removed.

THE *fifth* thing to be premiſed is, the removal of ſome miſtakes whereinto people may readily run themſelves, when we are about to prove their intereſt in Chriſt.

As *1ſt*, It is a miſtake to think that every one who is in Chriſt doth know that he is in him; for many are truly gracious, and have a good title to eternal life, who do not know ſo much, until it be made out afterwards: "Theſe things are written to believers, that they may know they have a true title to eternal life;" that is, that they may know they are believers, and ſo it is ſuppoſed they knew it not before.

2dly, It is a miſtake to think that all who come to the knowledge of their intereſt in Chriſt do attain an equal certainty about the ſame. One may ſay, "he is perſuaded nothing preſent, or to come, can ſeparate him from the love of God," another cometh but this length "I believe, help my unbelief."

3dly, It is a miſtake to think that every one who attaineth a ſtrong perſuaſion of his intereſt doth always hold there; for he who to-day may ſay of the Lord, "he is his refuge," and "his portion," will at another time ſay, "He is cut off," and will aſk, "if the truth of God's promiſe doth fail for evermore?"

4thly, It is alſo a miſtake to think that every one who doth attain a good knowledge of their gracious ſtate can formally anſwer all objections made to the contrary; but yet they may hold faſt the concluſion, and ſay, "I know whom I have believed." There be few grounds of the Chriſtian religion, whereof many people are ſo perſuaded, as that they are able to maintain them formally a-

gainſt all arguments brought to the contrary; and yet they may and will hold the concluſion ſtedfaſtly and juſtly. So it is in this caſe in hand.

5thly, It is no leſs a miſtake to imagine that the vain groundleſs confidence, which many profane ignorant Atheiſts do maintain, is this knowledge of an intereſt in Chriſt which we plead for. Many do falſely avow him "to be their Father," and many look for heaven who will be beguiled with thoſe "fooliſh virgins," yet we muſt not think, becauſe of this, that all knowledge of an intereſt is a deluſion and fancy, although theſe fools be deceived; for, whilſt thouſands are deluded, ſome can ſay on good and ſolid grounds, "We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lieth in wickedneſs."

Chapter II.

SECTION I.

The Ways by which the Lord draweth ſome to Chriſt, without a ſenſible preparatory Law-work.

HAVING premiſed theſe things, it now followeth that we give ſome marks by which a man may know if he be ſavingly in covenant with God, and hath a ſpecial intereſt in Chriſt, ſo as he may warrantably lay claim to God's favor and ſalvation. We ſhall only pitch upon two great and principal marks, not willing to trouble people with many.

But before we fall upon theſe, we will ſpeak of a preparatory work of the law, whereof the Lord doth ordinarily make uſe to prepare his own way in men's ſouls. This may have its own weight, as a mark, with ſome perſons. It is called the Work of the Law, or, the Work of Humiliation. It hath ſome proportion to that "ſpirit of bondage," and doth now under the New Teſtament anſwer unto it, and uſually leadeth on to the "Spirit of adoption."

Only, here, let it be remembered, 1. That we are not to ſpeak of this preparatory work of the law as a negative mark of a true intereſt in Chriſt, as if none might lay claim to God's favor who has not had this preparatory work, in the ſeveral ſteps of it, as we are to ſpeak of it; for, as we ſhall hear, the Lord doth not always keep that path with men. 2. The great reaſon why we ſpeak of it is, becauſe the Lord dealeth with many, whom he doth effectually call, by ſome ſuch preparatory work: and to thoſe, who have been ſo dealt with it may prove ſtrengthening, and will confirm them in laying the more weight on the marks which follow. 3. It may help to encourage others, who are under ſuch bondage of ſpirit, as a good prognoſtic of a gracious work to follow; for, as we ſhall circumſtantiate it, it will be rarely found to miſcarry and fail of a gracious iſſue. 4. Where God uſeth ſuch a preparatory work, he doth not keep one way or meaſure in it, as we ſhall hear.

For the more diſtinct handling of this preparatory work, we ſhall ſhortly hint the moſt ordinary ways by which the Lord leadeth people in unto the covenant ſavingly, and draweth them unto Chriſt.

Firſt, There are ſome called from the womb, as John the Baptiſt was, or in their very young years, before they can be deeply engaged actively in Satan's ways, as Timothy; it cannot be ſuppoſed that thoſe have ſuch a preparatory work as we are to ſpeak of. And becauſe ſome perſons may pretend to this way of effectual calling, we offer theſe marks of it, whereby thoſe who have been ſo called may be confirmed.

1ſt. Such uſe from their childhood to be kept free of ordinary pollutions wherewith children uſually are defiled; as ſwearing, lying, mocking of religion and religious perſons, *&c.* Thoſe whom God called effectually he ſanctifieth them from the time of that effectual calling: "Sin cannot have dominion over them" as over others, "becauſe they are under grace."

2dly. Religion is, as it were, natural to them; I mean, they need not be much preſſed to religious duties even

when they are but children; they run willingly that way, becauſe there is an inward principle of "love conſtraining them," ſo as they yield themſelves ſervants of righteouſneſs," without outward conſtraint.

3*dly*. Although ſuch know not when they were firſt acquainted with God, yet they have afterwards ſuch exerciſes of ſpirit befalling, as the ſaints in Scripture, of whoſe firſt converſation we hear not, do ſpeak of. They are ſhut out from God, upon ſome occaſion, now and then, and are admitted to come nearer again to their apprehenſion: their heart is alſo further broken up by the ordinances, as is ſaid of Lydia; and ordinarily they do remember when ſome ſpecial bit of religion and duty, or when ſome ſin, of which they were not taking notice before, was diſcovered to them. They who can apply theſe things to themſelves, have much to ſay for their effectual calling from their youth.

Secondly. Some are brought into Chriſt in a ſovereign goſpel-way, when the Lord, by ſome few words of love ſwallowing up any law-work, quickly taketh a perſon priſoner at the firſt, as he did Zaccheus, and others, who, upon a word ſpoken by Chriſt, did leave all and follow him; and we hear no noiſe of a law-work dealing with them before they cloſe with Chriſt Jeſus.

And becauſe ſome may pretend to this way of calling we ſhall touch ſome things moſt remarkable in that tranſaction with Zaccheus, for their clearing and confirmation. (1.) He had ſome deſire to ſee Chriſt, and ſuch a deſire as made him wave that which ſome would have judged prudence and diſcretion, whilſt he climbeth up upon a tree that he might ſee him. (2.) Chriſt ſpake to his heart, and that word took ſuch hold upon him that preſently with joy he did accept of Chriſt's offer, and cloſeth with Chriſt as Lord, whilſt few of any note were following him. (3.) Upon this his heart doth open to the poor, although it ſeems he was a covetous man before. (4.) He hath a due impreſſion of his former ways, evidencing his reſpect to the law of Moſes, and this he doth ſignify before all the company then preſent, not caring

to ſhame himſelf in ſuch things as probably were known to the world. (5.) Upon all theſe things, Chriſt confirmeth and ratifieth the bargain by his word; recommending to him that oneneſs of intereſt which behoved to be between him and the ſaints, and the thoughts of his own loſt condition if Chriſt had not come and ſought him, and found him: all which are clear.

We grant the Lord calleth ſome ſo, and if any can lay claim to the ſpecial things we have now hinted, they have a good confirmation of God's dealing with them from that Scripture; neither are they to vex themſelves becauſe of the want of a diſtinct preparatory law-work, if their heart hath yielded unto Chriſt; for a law-work is not deſirable, except for this end. Therefore Chriſt doth offer himſelf directly in the Scripture, and people are invited to come to him; and although many will not come to him who is the cautioner, until the ſpirit of bondage diſtreſs them for their debt, yet if any, upon the knowledge of their loſt eſtate, would flee and yield to Chriſt, none might warrantably preſs a law-work upon them.

As for others, whom Chriſt perſuaded by a word to follow him; whatſoever he did, or howſoever he ſpake to them, at his firſt meeting with them, we muſt rationally ſuppoſe that then he diſcovered ſo much of their own neceſſity, and his own fullneſs and excellency to them, as made them quit all, and run after him: and if he do ſo to any, we crave no more, ſince there is room enough there for the Phyſician.

So that from all this, as ſome may be confirmed and ſtrengthened, with whom God hath ſo dealt, ſo there is no ground nor occaſion for deluded ſouls to flatter themſelves in their condition, who remain ignorant and ſenſeleſs of their own miſeries, and Chriſt's all-ſufficiency, and hold faſt deceit.

Thirdly. There are ſome brought into Chriſt in a way yet more declarative of his free grace; and this is, when he effectually calleth men at the hour of death. We find ſomewhat recorded of this way in that pregnant ex-

ample of the "thief on the croſs." Although this ſeems not very pertinent for the purpoſe in hand, yet we ſhall ſpeak a little of it, that on the one hand men may be ſparing to judge and paſs ſentence upon either themſelves or others before the laſt gaſp; and we ſhall ſo circumſtantiate it, that, on the other hand, none may dare to delay ſo great a buſineſs to the laſt hour of their life.

We find theſe things remarkable in that buſineſs between Chriſt and the thief. 1. The man falleth at odds with his former companion. 2. He dareth not ſpeak a wrong word of God, whoſe hand is on him, but juſtifieth him in all that is befallen him. 3. He now ſeeth Jeſus Chriſt perſecuted by the world without a cauſe, and moſt injuriouſly. 4. He diſcovereth Chriſt to be a Lord and a King, whilſt enemies ſeem to hold him in contempt. 5. He believeth a being of glory after death ſo really, that he preferreth a portion of it to the preſent ſafety of his bodily life, which he knew Chriſt was able to grant to him at that time, and he might have choſen that with the other thief. 6. Although he was much abaſed in himſelf, and ſo humbled, that he pleaded but that Chriſt would remember him, yet he was nobly daring to throw himſelf upon the covenant, on life and death; and he had ſo much faith of Chriſt's all-ſufficiency, that he judged a ſimple remembrance from Chriſt would ſatisfyingly do his buſineſs. 7. He acquieſced ſweetly in the word which Chriſt ſpake to him for the ground of his comfort. All which are very clear in the caſe of that poor dying man, and do prove a very real work of God upon his heart.

As this example may encourage ſome to wait for good from God, who cannot as yet lay clear claim to any gracious work of his Spirit; ſo we requeſt all, as they love their ſouls, not to delay their ſoul-buſineſs, hoping for ſuch a caſt of Chriſt's hand in the end, as too many do; this being a rare miracle of mercy with the glory whereof Chriſt did honourably triumph over the ignominy of his croſs; a parrallel of which we ſhall hardly find in

all the Scripture beſide. Yea, as there be but few at all ſaved, "Many be called, but few choſen;" and moſt few ſaved this way; ſo the Lord hath peremptorily threatened to laugh at the calamity, and not to hear the cry of ſuch as mocked formerly at his reproof, and would not hear when he called to them; "becauſe I have called, and ye refuſed, I have ſtretched out my hand, and no man regarded; but ye have ſet at nought all my counſel, and would none of my reproof: I alſo will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh."—Which Scripture, although it doth not ſhut mercy's door upon any, who at the hour of death do ſincerely judge themſelves, and flee to Chriſt, as this penitent thief did; yet it is certain, it implieth that very few, who accepteth not the offer until then, are honored with repentance as he was: and ſo their cry, as not being ſincere, and of the right ſtamp, ſhall not be heard.

SECTION II.

The Work of the Law by which the Lord prepares his Way into Men's Souls; which is either more violent and ſudden, or more calm and gradual.

THE *Fourth* and moſt ordinary way by which many are brought in to Chriſt is by a clear and diſcernable work of the law and humiliation; which we ordinarily call *the ſpirit of bondage*, as was hinted before. We do not mean that every one whoſe conſcience is weakened with ſin and fear of wrath doth really cloſe with Chriſt; the contrary doth appear in Cain, Saul, Judas, &c. But there is a conviction of ſin, an awakening of conſcience, and work of humiliation, which, as we ſhall circumſtantiate it, doth rarely miſcarry or fail of a gracious iſſue, but ordinarily doth reſolve into the *Spirit of adoption*, and a gracious work of God's Spirit. And becauſe the Lord dealeth with many ſinners this way, and we find that many are much puzzled about the giving judgment of this law-work, we ſhall ſpeak of it particularly.

This work is either more violent and ſuddenly expedited, or it is more ſober and ſparing, protracted through a greater length of time, and ſo as the ſteps of it are very diſcernable. It is more violent in ſome, as in the Jailor Paul, and ſome other converts in the book of the *Acts of the Apoſtles*, on whom Chriſt did break in at an inſtant, and fell on them as with fire and ſword, and led them captive terribly. And becauſe ſome great legal ſhakings are deceitful, and turn to nothing, if not worſe, we ſhall point at ſome things remarkable in theſe converts ſpoken of before, which did prove the work of the law on them to have had a gracious iſſue and reſult.—1*ſt*. Some word of truth or diſpenſation putteth the perſon to a dreadful ſtand, with a great ſtir in the ſoul; "ſome are pricked in heart," "ſome fall on trembling," and this is ſuch a ſtir, that the perſon is brought to his wit's end: "What wilt thou have me to do?" ſaith Paul, "What muſt I do to be ſaved?" ſaith the Jailor.—2*dly*. The perſon is content to have ſalvation and God's friendſhip on any terms, as the queſtion does import, "What ſhall I do?" As if he had ſaid, What would I not do? What would I not forego? What would I not undergo? 3*dly*. The perſon accepteth the condition offered by Chriſt and his ſervants, as is clear in the fore cited Scriptures. 4*thly*. The perſon preſently becometh of one intereſt with the ſaints, joining himſelf with that perſecuted ſociety, putting reſpect on thoſe whom he had formerly perſecuted, joining and continuing with them in the profeſſion of Chriſt on all hazards. Thoſe with whom the Lord hath ſo dealt have much to ſay for a gracious work of God's Spirit in them; and it is like, many of them can date their work from ſuch a particular time and word, or diſpenſation, and can give ſome account of what paſſed between God and them, and of a ſenſible change following in them from that time forward; as Paul giveth a good account of the work and way of God with him afterwards.

Again, the Lord ſometimes carrieth on this work more calmly, ſoftly, and ſparingly, protracting it ſo, as

the ſeveral ſteps of men's exerciſe under it are very diſcernable. It would draw a great length to enlarge every ſtep of it; we ſhall touch the moſt obſervable things in it.

1*ſt.* The Lord layeth ſiege to men, who, it may be, have often refuſed to yield to him, offering himſelf in the ordinances; and by ſome word preached, read, or borne in on the mind, or by ſome providence leading in unto the word, he doth aſſault the houſe kept peaceably by the ſtrong man the devil; and thus Chriſt, who is the ſtronger man, cometh upon him, and by the ſpirit of truth, doth faſten the *word* on the man, in which God's curſe is denounced againſt ſuch and ſuch ſins, whereof the man knoweth himſelf guilty. The ſpirit convinceth the man, and bindeth it upon him, that he is the ſame perſon againſt whom the word of God doth ſpeak, becauſe he is guilty of ſuch ſins; and from ſome ſins the man is led on to ſee more, until ordinarily he come to ſee the ſins of his youth, ſins of omiſſion, &c. yea, he is led on, until he ſee himſelf guilty almoſt of the breach of the whole law; he ſeeth "innumerable evils compaſſing him," as David ſpeaketh in a fit of exerciſe. A man ſometimes will ſee ugly ſights of ſin in this caſe, and is ſharp-ſighted to reckon an affinity to almoſt every ſin. Thus "the ſpirit cometh and convinceth of ſin."

2*dly.* The Lord ſhaketh a ſpecial ſtrong hold in the garriſon, a refuge of lies, to which the man betaketh himſelf when his ſins are thus diſcovered to him. The poor man pretendeth to faith in Chriſt, whereby he thinks his burden is taken off him, as the Phariſees ſaid, "We have one father, even God;" they pretend to a ſpecial relation to God as a common Lord. The ſpirit of God beats the man from this by the truth of the ſcriptures, proving that he hath no true faith, and ſo no intereſt in Chriſt, nor any true ſaving grace; ſhewing clear differences between the true grace and the counterfeit fancies which the man hath in him; and between him and the truly godly, as Chriſt laboreth to do to thoſe in *John* viii. 42, 44. "If God were your father, ye

would love me. Ye are of the devil, for ye do the luſts of ſuch a father." So, "fear ſurpriſeth the hypocrite in heart," eſpecially when the Lord diſcovereth to him conditions in many of theſe promiſes wherein he truſted moſt not eaſily attainable; he now ſeeth grace and faith another thing than once he judged them to be. We may in ſome reſpect apply that word here, "The ſpirit convinceth him of ſin, becauſe he hath not believed on the ſon:" he is particularly convinced of unbelief, he ſeeth now a huge diſtance between himſelf and the godly, who he thought before outſtripped him only in ſome unneceſſary, proud, hateful preciſeneſs: he now ſeeth himſelf deluded, and in the broad way with the periſhing multitude: and ſo in this ſight of his miſery, coucheth down under his own burden, which, before this time, he thought Chriſt did bear for him; he now beginneth to ſcar at the promiſes, becauſe of that and ſuch other words, "What haſt thou to do to take my covenant in thy mouth."

3*dly*. The man becometh careful about his ſalvation, and beginneth to take it to heart, as the one thing neceſſary; he is brought to this with the Jailor, "What ſhall I do to be ſaved?" His ſalvation becometh the leading thing with him. It was leaſt in his thoughts before, but now it prevaileth, and other things are much miſregarded by him. Since his ſoul is ready to periſh, "what ſhall it profit him to gain the world, if he loſe his ſoul?" Some here are much puzzled with the thoughts of an irrevocable decree to their prejudice, and with the fears of uncertain death, which may attack them before they get matters put to a point; and ſome are vexed with apprehenſions that they are guilty of the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, which is unpardonable, and ſo are driven a dangerous length, Satan ſtill caſting up to them many ſad examples of people who have dolefully put an end to their own exerciſe: but they are in the hand of one who "knoweth how to ſuccour them that are tempted."

4*thly*. When a man is thus in hazard of miſcarrying, the Lord uſeth a work of preventing mercy towards

him, quietly and under-hand ſupporting him; and this is by bearing in upon his mind the poſſibility of his ſalvation, leading the man to the remembrance of pregnant proofs of God's free and rich grace, pardoning groſs tranſgreſſors, ſuch as Manaſſeh, who was a bloody idolatrous man, and had correſpondence with the devil, and yet obtained mercy, and other Scriptures bearing offers of grace and favor indifferently to all who will yield to Chriſt, whatſoever they have been formerly; ſo as the man is brought again to this, "What ſhall I do to be ſaved?" which doth ſuppoſe that he apprehendeth a poſſibility of being ſaved, elſe he would not propound the queſtion. He applieth that or the like word to himſelf, "It may be ye ſhall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger. He findeth nothing excluding him from mercy now, if he have a heart for the thing. Although here, it may be, the man doth not perceive that it is the Lord who upholdeth, yet afterwards he can tell, that "when his foot was ſlipping, God's mercy held him up;" as the Pſalmiſt ſpeaketh in another caſe. And he will afterwards ſay, when he "was as a beaſt, and a fool, in many reſpects, God held him by the hand.

5thly. After this diſcovery of a poſſibility to be ſaved, there is a work of deſire quickened in the ſoul; which is clear in that ſame expreſſion, "What ſhall I do to be ſaved?" But ſometimes this deſire is directed amiſs, whilſt it goeth out thus, "What ſhall I do that I may work the works of God?" In which caſe the man, formerly perplexed with fear and care about his ſalvation, would be at ſome work of his own to extricate himſelf; and here he ſuddenly reſolveth to do all that is commanded, and to forego every evil way (yet neglecting Chriſt Jeſus) and ſo beginneth to take ſome courage to himſelf again, "eſtabliſhing his own righteouſneſs, but not ſubmitting unto the righteouſneſs of God." Whereupon the Lord maketh a new aſſault on him, intending the diſcovery of his abſolutely broken ſtate in himſelf, that ſo room may be made for the cautioner; as Joſhua did to the people, when he found them ſo bold in their un-

dertakings, "Ye cannot ſerve the Lord," ſaith he, "for he is a holy God, a jealous God," &c. In this new aſſault the Lord, 1. bends up againſt the man the ſpirituality of the law; the commandment cometh with a new charge in the ſpiritual meaning of it, "The law came," ſaith Paul, *viz.* in the ſpiritual meaning of it: Paul had never ſeen ſuch a ſight of the law before. 2. God moſt holily doth looſe the reſtraining bonds which he had laid upon the man's corruption, and ſuffereth it not only to boil and ſwell within, but to threaten to break out in all the outward members. Thus ſin groweth bold, and kicketh at the law, becoming exceeding ſinful, "but ſin, taking occaſion by the commandment, wrought in me all manner of concupiſcence. For without the law ſin was dead. For I was alive without the law once; but, when the commandment came, ſin revived, and I died. Was then that which is good made death unto me?—God forbid. But ſin, that it might appear ſin, working death in me by that which is good; that ſin by the commandment might become exceeding ſinful." 3. The Lord doth diſcover to the man, more now than ever before, the uncleanneſs of his righteouſneſs, and what ſpots are in his beſt things. Theſe things kill the man, and he dieth in his own conceit, and deſpaireth of relief in himſelf, if it come not from above.

6thly. After many ups and downs here, ordinarily the man reſolveth ſome retirement; he deſireth to be alone, he cannot keep company as before. Like thoſe in a beſieged city, who, when they ſee they cannot hold out, and would be glad of any good condition from the beſieging enemy, go to a council, that they may reſolve ſomewhat; ſo the man here retireth, that he may ſpeak with himſelf. This is like that "communing with our own heart, "Thus God leadeth to the wilderneſs, that he may ſpeak to the heart." When the perſon is retired, the thoughts of his heart, which were ſcattered in former ſteps of the exerciſe, do more obſervably throng in here. We ſhall reduce them into this method. (1.) The man thinks of his unhappy folly in bearing arms againſt God

and here there be large thoughts of former ways, with a bluſhing countenance and ſelf-loathing: "Then ſhall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and ſhall loathe yourſelves in your own ſight," like that of *Pſal.* li. 3. "His ſin is ever before him." (2.) Then he remembereth how many fair opportunities of yielding to God he hath baſely loſt: his ſpirit is like to faint when he remembereth that, as is ſaid in another caſe, "When I remember theſe things I pour out my ſoul in me. O my God, my ſoul is caſt down within me. Deep calleth unto deep, all thy waves are gone over me." (3.) He now thinks of many Chriſtians whom he mocked and deſpiſed in his heart, perſuading himſelf now that they are happy, as having choſen the better part; he thinks of the condition of thoſe who wait on Chriſt, as the Queen of Sheba did of Solomon's ſervants; "Happy are thy ſervants," ſaith ſhe, "who ſtand continually before thee, and that hear thy wiſdom," "Bleſſed are they that dwell in thy houſe:" He wiſheth to be one of the meaneſt who have any relation to God; as the *prodigal ſon* doth ſpeak, he would be as "one of the Father's hired ſervants." (4.) Then he calleth to mind the good report that is gone abroad of God, according to that teſtimony—The prophet knew that God was "a gracious God and merciful, ſlow to anger, and of great kindneſs," &c. The free and large promiſes and offers of grace come in here; and the glorious practices which have paſt upon ſinners of all ſorts, according to the fame of God in Scripture. (5) He thinks with himſelf, Why hath God ſpared me ſo long? and why have I got ſuch a ſight of my ſin? and why hath he kept me from breaking priſon at my own hand, in chuſing ſome unhappy outgate? why hath he made this ſtrange change on me? It may be it is in his heart to do me good; O that it may be ſo!——Although all theſe thoughts be not in the preparatory work of every one, yet they are with many, and very promiſing where they are.

7thly. Upon all theſe thoughts and meditations the

man, more ſeriouſly than ever before, reſolveth to pray, and to make ſome eſſay with God, upon life and death; he concludeth, "It can be no worſe with him; for if he ſit ſtill he periſheth;" as the lepers ſpeak, He conſidereth, with the pinched prodigal ſon, "that there is bread enough in the Father's houſe and to ſpare, whilſt he periſheth for want:" ſo he goeth to God, for he knoweth not what elſe to make of his condition, as the prodigal ſon doth. And it may be, here he reſolveth what to ſpeak; but readily things do vary when he is ſifted before God, as the prodigal ſon forgot ſome of his premeditated prayers, "I will ariſe, and go to my father, and will ſay unto him, Father, I have ſinned againſt Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy ſon; make me as one of thy hired ſervants. And he aroſe and came unto his father, and ſaid unto him, Father, I have ſinned againſt Heaven, and in thy ſight, and am no more worthy to be called thy ſon."

And now, when he cometh before God, more obſervably than ever before, 1*ſt*, He beginneth, with the Publican, *afar off*, *Luke* xviii. 13. with many thorough-confeſſions and ſelf-condemnings, whereof he is very liberal, "I have ſinned againſt Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy," *&c.* 2*dly*. Now begin his thoughts concerning the hearing of his prayer, which he was not wont to queſtion much; he now knows what thoſe expreſſions of the ſaints concerning the hearing of their prayers do import. 3*dly*. It is obſervable in this addreſs, that there are many broken ſentences, like that of *Pſal.* vi. 3. "But thou, O Lord, how long?" ſupplied with ſighs and "groanings which cannot be uttered," and greedy looking upward, thereby ſpeaking more than can be well expreſſed by words. 4*thly*. There be ordinarily ſome interruptions, and, as it were, diverſions; the man ſpeaking ſometimes to the enemy, ſometimes to his own heart, ſometimes to the multitude in the world, as David doth in other caſes; "O thou enemy, deſtructions are come to a perpetual end." "Why art thou caſt down, O my ſoul? and why art thou diſquieted in

me? hope thou in God, for I ſhall yet praiſe him for the help of his countenance." "O ye ſons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into ſhame?" *5thly.* It is obſervable here, that ſometimes the man will halt and be ſilent, to hear ſome indiſtinct whiſpering of a joyful ſound glancing on the mind, or ſome news in ſome broken word of Scripture, which, it may be, the man ſcarcely knoweth to be Scripture, or whether it is come from God, or whether an injection from Satan to delude him; yet this he hath reſolved, only to "hear what God the Lord will ſpeak," as, upon another occaſion. *6thly.* More diſtinct promiſes come into the man's mind, whereupon he aſſayeth to lay hold, but is beaten off with objections, as in another caſe the Pſalmiſt is, "But thou art holy—But I am a worm." Now it is about the dawning of the day with the man, and faith will ſtir as ſoon as the Lord imparteth "the joyful ſound," This is the ſubſtance of the covenant, which may be ſhortly ſummed up in theſe words, "Chriſt Jeſus is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleaſed; hear ye him."

We can ſpeak no further of the man's exerciſe as a preparatory work; for what followeth is more than preparatory: yet, that the exerciſe may appear complete and full, we ſhall add here, that after all theſe things, the Lord, it may be, after many anſwers of divers ſorts, mightily conveyeth the ſound of his covenant into the heart, and determineth the heart to cloſe with it; and God now draweth ſo to Chriſt, and ſo ſhapeth out the heart for him, that the conception cannot miſcarry; for now the heart is ſo in breadth and length for him, as that leſs cannot ſatisfy, and more is not deſired; "Whom have I in heaven but thee? or whom have I deſired on earth beſide thee?' The ſoul now reſolveth to die if he command ſo, yet at his door, and facing to himwards.

We have drawn this preparatory work to ſome length, not tieing any man to ſuch a work ſo circumſtantiated: only we ſay, the Lord dealeth ſo with ſome; and where he ſo convinceth of ſin, corruption, and ſelf-emptineſs,

and maketh a man take ſalvation to heart as the one thing neceſſary, and ſetteth him on work in the uſe of the means which God hath appointed for relief; I ſay, ſuch a work rarely ſhall be found to fail of a good iſſue and gracious reſult.

SECTION III.

The difference betwixt that preparatory Law-work which hath a gracious Iſſue and the Convictions of Hypocrites.

Object. HYPOCRITES and reprobates have great ſtirrings of conſcience, and deep convictions about ſin, ſetting them on work ſometimes, and I do ſuſpect any preparatory work of the law I ever had to be but ſuch as they have.

Anſw. It will be hard to give ſure eſſential differences between the preparatory work in thoſe in whom afterwards Chriſt is formed and thoſe legal ſtirrings which are ſometimes in reprobates. If there were not ſome gracious reſult of theſe convictions and wakenings of conſcience in the Lord's people, and other marks, of which we ſhall ſpeak afterwards, it were hard to adventure upon any difference that is clear in theſe legal ſtirrings. Yet, for anſwer to the objection, I ſhall offer ſome things, which rarely will be found in the ſtirrings of reprobates, and which are ordinarily found in that law-work which hath a gracious iſſue.

1ſt. The convictions of hypocrites and reprobates are uſually confined to ſome very groſs tranſgreſſions. Saul grants no more but the *perſecuting of David*; Judas grants only the *betraying of innocent blood*: but uſually thoſe convictions, by which the Lord prepareth his own way in the ſoul, although they may begin at one or more groſs particular tranſgreſſions, yet they ſiſt not; but the man is led on to ſee many breaches of the law, and "innumerable evils compaſſing him," as David ſpeaketh in the ſight of his ſin. And withal, that univerſal conviction, if I may call it ſo, is not general, as uſually we hear ſenſeleſs men ſaying, "that in all things

they ſin ;" but it is particular and condeſcending, as Paul afterwards ſpake of himſelf; he not only is the *chief of ſinners*, but particularly, he was a *blaſphemer*, a *perſecutor*.

2*dly*. The convictions which hypocrites have do ſeldom reach their corruption, and that body of death, which breeds an averſeneſs from what is good, and ſtrongly inclineth to what is evil. Ordinarily, where we find hypocrites ſpeaking of themſelves in Scripture, they ſpeak loftily, and with ſome ſelf-conceit, both as to their freedom from corruption. The Phariſees ſay to the poor man, "Thou waſt altogether born in ſins, and doſt thou teach us?" as if they themſelves were not as corrupt by nature as he: they ſpeak of great ſins, as Hazael did, "Am I a dog, that I ſhould do this great thing?" and alſo in their undertakings of duty, as that *ſcribe* ſpake, "Maſter, I will follow thee whitherſoever thou goeſt." See how the people do ſpeak; they undertake to do all that God will command them: ſo that they ſtill "go about," in any caſe, "to eſtabliſh their own righteouſneſs, not ſubmitting unto the righteouſneſs of God." But I may ſay, that convictions and exerciſe about corruption, and that body of death, inclining to evil, and diſenabling for good, is not the leaſt part of the work where the Lord is preparing his own way. They uſe to judge themſelves very wretched becauſe of a body of ſin, and are at their wits' end how to be delivered, as Paul ſpeaketh, when he is under the exerciſe of it afterwards, "O wretched man that I am, who ſhall deliver me from the body of this death?"

3*dly*. It will ordinarily be found, that the convictions which are in hypocrites either are not ſo ſerious, as that ſome other buſineſs will not put them out of head before any ſatisfaction be gotten; as in Cain, who went and *built a city*, and we hear no more of his convictions. Felix went away until a more *convenient time*, and we hear no more of his *trembling*; or if that work become very ſerious, then it runneth to the other extremity, and deſpair of relief, leaving no room for any outgate. So

we find Judas very ſerious in his convictions, yet he grew deſperate, and hanged himſelf. But where the Lord prepareth his own way, the work is both ſo ſerious as the perſon cannot be put off it, until he finds ſome ſatisfaction, and yet under that very ſeriouſneſs he lieth open for relief: both which are clear in the Jailor's words, "What muſt I do to be ſaved?" This ſerious inquiry after relief is a very obſervable thing in the preparatory work which leadeth on to Chriſt. Yet we deſire none to lay too much weight on theſe things, ſince God hath allowed clear differences between the precious and the vile.

Object. I ſtill fear I have not had ſo thorough a ſight of my ſin and miſery as the Lord giveth to many whom he effectually calleth, eſpecially to great tranſgreſſors, ſuch as I am.

Anſw. It is true, the Lord diſcovereth to ſome great ſights of their ſin and miſery, and they are thereby put under great legal terrors; but as all are not brought in by that ſenſible preparatory law-work, as we ſhewed before, ſo even thoſe who are dealt with after that way are very differently and variouſly exerciſed in regard of the degrees of terror, and of the continuance of that work. The Jailor hath a violent work of very ſhort continuance: Paul hath a work continuing three day; ſome perſons are "in bondage through fear of death all their days:" ſo that we muſt not limit the Lord to one way of working here. The main thing we are to look unto in theſe legal wakenings and convictions of ſin and miſery is, if the Lord reach thoſe ends in us for which uſually theſe ſtirrings and convictions are ſent into the ſoul, and if thoſe ends be reached, it is well; we are not to vex ourſelves about any preparatory work further. Now, thoſe ends which God driveth ordinarily with ſinners by theſe legal terrors and wakenings of conſcience are four.

Firſt. The Lord diſcovers ſights of men's ſin and miſery to them, to chaſe them out of themſelves, and to put them out of conceit of their own righteouſneſs. Men

naturally have great thoughts of themſelves, and do incline much to the covenant of works; the Lord therefore doth diſcover to them ſo much of their ſin and corruption, even in their beſt things, that they are made to loathe themſelves, and to deſpair of relief in themſelves; and ſo they are forced to flee out of themſelves, and from the covenant of works, to ſeek refuge elſewhere—"They become dead to themſelves and the law," as to the point of juſtification; then "have they no more confidence in the fleſh," this is ſuppoſed in the offers of Chriſt "coming to ſeek and ſave that which is loſt," and "to be a phyſician to thoſe who are ſick."

The *ſecond* great end is, To commend Chriſt Jeſus to men's hearts above all things, that ſo they may fall in love with him, and betake themſelves to that *treaſure* and *jewel* which only enricheth, and, by ſo doing, may ſerve the Lord's deſign in the contrivement of the goſpel, which was the manifeſtation of his free grace thro' Chriſt Jeſus in the ſalvation of men. The ſight of a man's own miſery and damnable eſtate by nature is a ready way to make him prize Chriſt highly, who alone can ſet ſuch a wretch at liberty: yea, it not only leadeth a man to an high eſteem of Chriſt, but alſo of all things that relate to that way of ſalvation, as grace, the new covenant, faith, and maketh him carefully to gather and treaſure up his *Michtams* or golden ſcriptures for the confirmation of his intereſt in theſe things.

The *third* great end is, to deter and ſcar people from ſin, and to make them caſt out with it, and conſent to put their neck under all his yoke. God kindleth ſome ſparks of hell in men's boſoms by the diſcovery of their ſin, as a ready mean to make them henceforth ſtand in awe, knowing "how bitter a thing it is to depart from the Lord." So we find reſt offered to the weary, upon condition they will take on Chriſt's yoke. "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye ſhall find reſt unto your ſouls." And God offereth to own men as their God and Father, upon condition they will allow no peaceable abode to

Belial. "What fellowſhip hath righteouſneſs with unrighteouſneſs? and what communion hath light with darkneſs? and what concord hath Chriſt with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye ſeparate, ſaith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you, and will be a father unto you, and ye ſhall be my ſons and daughters, ſaith the Lord Almighty."

The *fourth* great end is, to work up men to a patient and thankful ſubmiſſion to all the Maſter's pleaſure.—This is a ſingular piece of work, "Then ſhalt thou remember, and be confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, becauſe of thy ſhame, when I am pacified towards thee, for all that thou haſt done, ſaith the Lord." The ſight of a man's own vileneſs and deſervings maketh him ſilent, and to lay his hand on his mouth, whatſoever God doth unto him; "I was dumb, and opened not my mouth, becauſe thou didſt it." "God hath puniſhed us leſs than our iniquities." "I will bear the indignation of the Lord, becauſe I have ſinned." The man careth not what God doth to him, or how he deals with him, if he ſave him from the deſerved wrath to come: alſo any mercy is a large mercy to him who hath ſeen ſuch a ſight of himſelf; he is "leſs than the leaſt of mercies;" "any crumb falling from the Maſter's table is welcome:" he thinks it rich "mercy that he is not conſumed." This is the thing that marvelloufly maketh God's poor croſſed people ſo ſilent under, and ſatisfied with, their lot; nay, they think he deſerveth hell who openeth his mouth at any thing God doth to him, ſince he hath pardoned his tranſgreſſions.

So then, for ſatisfying the objection, I ſay, if the Lord hath driven thee out of thyſelf, and commended Chriſt to thy heart above all things, and made thee reſolve, in his ſtrength, to wage war with every known tranſgreſſion, and thou art in ſome meaſure as a weaned child, acquieſcing in what he doth unto thee, deſiring to lay thy hand on thy mouth thankfully; then thy convictions of ſin and miſery, and whatſoever thou doſt plead as a prepa-

ratory work, is ſufficient, and thou art to debate no more concerning it. Only be adviſed ſo to ſtudy new diſcoveries of the ſenſe of thy loſt condition every day, becauſe of thy old and new ſins; and alſo to ſee freſh help in Chriſt, who is a prieſt for ever to make interceſſion; and to have the work of ſanctification and patience with thankfulneſs renewed and quickened often: for ſomewhat of that work which abaſeth thee, exalteth Chriſt, and conformeth to his will, muſt convey thee throughout all thy lifetime in this world.

Chapter III.

SECTION I.

Of Faith.

WE come now to ſpeak of ſome more clear and ſure marks, by which men may take up their gracious ſtate and intereſt in Chriſt. The *firſt* thing whereby men may know it is, their cloſing with Chriſt in the goſpel, wherein he is held forth. This is believing, or faith, which is the condition of the covenant; "It is of faith," "Believe on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and thou ſhalt be ſaved." Now, although in propriety of ſpeech, it is hard to prove an intereſt by faith, it being our very intereſt in him; yet the heart's cloſing with Chriſt Jeſus is ſo diſcernable in itſelf, that we may well place it amongſt the marks of a gracious ſtate: and if a man can make out this, that he believeth on and in Chriſt Jeſus, he thereby doth prove a very true intereſt in him.

Many do ſcar at this as a mark, upon one of theſe three grounds ordinarily.

(1.) Some conceive faith to be a difficult myſterious thing, hardly attainable. To theſe I ſay, Do not miſtake; faith is not ſo difficult as many do apprehend it

to be. I grant true faith in the meaneſt degree is the gift of God, and above the power of fleſh and blood; for God muſt "draw men to Chriſt," "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath ſent me draw him." Unto you it is given in the behalf of Chriſt to believe on him." Yet it were a reflection upon Chriſt, and all he hath done, to ſay it were a matter of inſuperable difficulty; as is clear, "The righteouſneſs which is of faith ſpeaketh on this wiſe, Say not in thine heart, Who ſhall aſcend into heaven? that is, to bring Chriſt down from above; or, Who ſhall deſcend into the deep? that is, to bring up Chriſt again from the dead. But what ſaith it? The world is nigh thee, even in thy mouth and in thy heart; that is, the word of faith which we preach. That if thou ſhalt confeſs with thy mouth the Lord Jeſus, and ſhalt believe in thine heart that God hath raiſed him from the dead, thou ſhalt be ſaved; for with the heart man believeth unto righteouſneſs, and with the mouth confeſſion is made unto ſalvation. For the Scripture ſaith, Whoſoever believeth on him ſhall not be aſhamed." It were, according to that Scripture, as much upon the matter as to ſay, Chriſt came not from heaven, is not riſen from the dead, or aſcended victorious to heaven. I ſay, he hath made the way to heaven moſt eaſy; and faith, which is the condition required on our part, more eaſy than men do imagine. For the better underſtanding of this, conſider that juſtifying faith is not to believe that I am elected, or to believe that God loveth me, or that Chriſt died for me, or the like; theſe things are indeed very difficult, and almoſt impoſſible at the firſt hand to be attained to by thoſe who are ſerious; whilſt natural Atheiſts and deluded hypocrites find no difficulty in aſſerting all thoſe things: I ſay, true juſtifying faith is not any of the foreſaid things; neither is it ſimply the believing of any ſentence that is written, or that can be thought upon. I grant, he that believeth on Chriſt Jeſus believeth what God hath ſaid concerning man's ſinful miſerable condition by nature, and he believeth that to be true, that "there is life in the Son, who

was ſlain, and is riſen again from the dead:" but none of theſe, nor the believing of many ſuch truths, do ſpeak out juſtifying faith, or that believing on the Son of God ſpoken of in Scripture: for then it were ſimply an act of the underſtanding: but true juſtifying faith, which we now ſeek after, as a good mark of an intereſt in Chriſt, is chiefly and principally an act or work of the heart and will; having preſuppoſed ſundry things about truth in the underſtanding "with the heart it is believed "unto righteouſneſs;" and although it ſeem, that a man is ſaved upon condition that he believe this truth, "God raiſed Chriſt from the dead," yet we muſt underſtand another thing there, than the believing the truth of that propoſition: for beſide that all devils have that faith, whereby they believe that God raiſed Chriſt from the dead, ſo the Scripture hath clearly reſolved juſtifying faith into a *receiving* of Chriſt; "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the ſons of God, even to them that believe on his name." The *receiving* of Chriſt is there explained to be the *believing on his name.* It is ſtill called a *ſtaying on the Lord*, a *truſting in God*, often mentioned in the *Pſalms*, and the word is *a leaning on him.* It is a *believing on Chriſt*, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath ſent, and often ſo expreſſed in the New Teſtament.—When God maketh men believe ſavingly, he is ſaid to *draw* them unto Chriſt; and when the Lord inviteth them to come to him, "All that the Father giveth me, ſhall come to me; and him that cometh to me, I will in no wiſe caſt out. No man can come to me, except the Father which hath ſent me draw him." The kingdom of heaven is like a man finding a jewel, wherewith he falleth in love—Now, I ſay, this acting of the heart on Chriſt Jeſus is not ſo difficult a thing as is conceived.—Shall that be judged a myſterious difficult thing which doth conſiſt much in deſire? If men have but an appetite, they have it; for they are "bleſſed that hunger after righteouſneſs;" "If you will you are welcome;" It is a matter of ſuch intricacy and inſuperable difficulty

greedily *to look* to that exalted Saviour? "Look unto me, and be ye ſaved all the ends of the earth:" and to receive a thing that is offered, held forth, and declared to be mine, if I will but accept and take it, and in a manner "open my mouth," and give way to it? "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." Such a thing is faith, if not leſs. Oh, if I could perſuade people what is juſtifying faith, which impropriateth Chriſt to me! We often ſcar people from their juſt reſt and quiet, by making them to apprehend faith to be ſome deep myſterious thing, and by moving unneceſſary doubts about it, whereby it is needleſsly darkened.

(2.) Some make no uſe of this mark, as judging it a high preſumptuous crime to pretend to ſo excellent a thing as is the very condition of the new covenant. To theſe I ſay, You need not ſtartle ſo much at it, as if it were high pride to pretend to it: for whatſoever true faith be, men muſt reſolve to have it, or nothing at all; all other marks are in vain without it; a thouſand things beſides will not do the buſineſs: "Unleſs a man believe, he abideth in the ſtate of condemnation," "He that believeth not is condemned already, becauſe he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. He that believeth not the Son ſhall not ſee life, but the wrath of God abideth on him."

(3.) Others do not meddle with this noble mark of faith, becauſe they judge it a work of the greateſt difficulty to find out faith where it is. To theſe I ſay, It is not ſo difficult to find it out, ſince "he that believeth, hath the witneſs in himſelf; it is a thing which by ſome ſerious ſearch may be known. Not only may we do much to find it out by the preparatory work going before it in many, as the apprehending and believing of a man's loſt eſtate, and that he cannot do his own buſineſs, and that there is ſatisfying fullneſs in Chriſt, very deſirable if he could overtake it; a ſerious minding of this, with a heart laid open for relief; as alſo by the ordinary companions and concomitants of it, *viz.* the liking of Chriſt's dominion, his kingly and prophetical office, a

deſire to reſign myſelf wholly up to him, to be at his diſpoſing; as alſo by the native conſequence of it, *viz.* the affoilzieing of the word, the affoilzieing of my own conſcience according to the word, a heart purifying work, a working by love; I ſay, not only may we know faith by theſe things, but it is diſcernable by itſelf and of its own nature. Although I deny not but there muſt be ſome help of God's Spirit, "by which we know what is freely given unto us of God," as alſo, that God hath allowed many evidences and marks as precious helps, whereby men may clear up faith more fully to themſelves, "Theſe things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life;" yet I ſtill ſay, that faith, or believing, which is ſome acting of the heart upon Chriſt in the goſpel, and the tranſacting with him there, is diſcernable of itſelf, and by itſelf, to a judicious underſtanding perſon, with an ordinary influence of the ſpirit, unleſs the Lord, for reaſons known to himſelf, do overcloud a man's reflex light, by which he ſhould take up and perceive what is in him.

This juſtifying faith, which we aſſert to be ſo diſcernable, is, in the Lord's deep wiſdom and gracious condeſcendency, variouſly expreſſed in Scripture, according to the different actings of it upon God, and outgoings after him; ſo as every one who hath it may find and take it up in his own mould. It ſometimes acteth by a deſire of union with him in Chriſt: this is that *looking* to him in *Iſa.* xlv. 22. "Look unto me, and be ye ſaved, all the ends of the earth." This ſeems to be a weak act of faith, and far below other actings of it at other times perhaps in that ſame perſon. Men will look to what they dare not approach, to their apprehenſion which they dare not touch or embrace: they may look to one to whom they dare not ſpeak: yet God hath made the promiſe to faith in that acting, as the fore cited ſcripture doth ſhew: and this he hath done mercifully and wiſely; for this is the only diſcernable way of the acting of faith of ſome perſons ſometimes. Such are the actings or out-

goings of faith expreſſed in ſcripture by "hungering and thirſting after righteouſneſs," and that expreſſed by *willing*, "And whoſoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

Again, this faith goeth out ſometimes in the act of recumbency, or leaning on the Lord, the ſoul taking up Chriſt then as a reſting-ſtone, and God hath ſo held him out, although he be a ſtumbling-ſtone to others. This acting of it is hinted in the expreſſions of *truſting* and *ſtaying* on God, ſo often mentioned in ſcripture: and precious promiſes are made in this acting of faith, as "God will keep them in perfect peace whoſe minds are ſtayed on him; becauſe ſuch do truſt in him. Truſt in the Lord; for with him is everlaſting ſtrength." "They that truſt in the Lord ſhall be as Mount Zion, which abideth for ever." I ſay, the Lord hath made promiſes to this way of faith's acting, as knowing it will often go out after him in this way with many perſons; and this way of its acting will be moſt diſcernable to them.

It goeth out after God ſometimes by an act of waiting; when the ſoul hath ſomewhat depending before God, and hath not got out his mind ſatisfyingly concerning that thing, then faith doth wait; and ſo it hath the promiſe, "They ſhall not be aſhamed that wait for me." Sometimes it acteth in a willful way upon the Lord, when the ſoul apprehendeth God thruſting it away, and threatening its ruin; "Though he ſlay me, yet will I truſt in him." The faith of that poor woman of Canaan, ſo highly commended by Chriſt, did go out in this way of willful acting over difficulties; and the Lord ſpeaketh much good of it, and to it, becauſe ſome will be put to it to exerciſe faith that way ſometimes, and ſo they have that for their encouragement. It were tedious to inſtance all the ſeveral ways of the acting of faith upon, and its exerciſe about, and outgoing after Chriſt. I may ſay, according to the various conditions and preſſures of the ſoul of man, the Lord hath variouſly held out himſelf and his fullneſs in Chriſt, under divers notions, as might moſt fitly meet the diſtreſs or condition of man.

And accordingly faith, which God hath appointed to traffic and travel between Chriſt and man, as the inſtrument of conveyance of his fulneſs unto man, and of maintaining union and communion with him, acteth variously and differently upon God in Chriſt; for faith is the very ſhaping out of a man's heart according to God's device of ſalvation by Chriſt Jeſus, "in whom it pleaſed the Father that all fulneſs ſhould dwell;" ſo that, let Chriſt turn what way he will, faith pointeth that way. Now he turneth all ways in which he can be uſeful to poor man; and therefore faith acteth accordingly on him for drawing out of that fulneſs, according to a man's caſe and condition, As for example, The ſoul is *naked*, deſtitute of a covering to keep it from the ſtorm of God's wrath; Chriſt is *fine raiment*, then accordingly faith's work here is to "put on the Lord Jeſus."—The ſoul is hungry and thirſty after ſomewhat that may everlaſtingly ſatisfy; Chriſt Jeſus is "milk, wine, water, the bread of life, and the true manna;" he is "the feaſt of fat things, and of wine refined;" then the work and exerciſe of faith is to "go, buy, eat and drink abundantly. The ſoul is purſued for guilt more or leſs, and is not law-biding; Chriſt Jeſus is the city of refuge, and the high prieſt there, during whoſe lifetime, that is for ever, the poor man who gets thither is ſafe; then the work and exerciſe of faith is "to flee thither for refuge, to lay hold on the hope ſet before us. In a word, whatſoever way he may benefit poor man, ſo he ſpeaketh of himſelf. And as he holdeth out himſelf in the Scripture, ſo faith doth point towards him. If he be a bridegroom, faith will go out in a marriage relation: if he be a father, faith pleadeth the man to be a child: if he be a ſhepherd, faith pleads the man may be one of his ſheep; if he be a Lord, faith calleth him ſo, which none can do but by the Spirit of Jeſus; if he be dead, and riſen again for our juſtification, faith "believeth God hath raiſed him" on that account, Whereſoever he be, there would faith be; and whatſoever he is, faith would be ſomewhat proportionally: for by faith the heart is ſha-

pen out in breadth and length for him; yea, when the fame and report of him goeth abroad in his truth, altho' faith ſeeth not much, yet it "believeth on his name," upon the very fame he hath ſent abroad of himſelf, *John* i. 12.

But here, for avoiding of miſtakes, conſider, (1.) That although juſtifying faith acteth ſo variouſly, yet every believer who hath a good title to Chriſt Jeſus hath not all theſe various actings and exerciſes of faith: for his condition craveth them not; and alſo the Maſter is pleaſed not to lead out the faith of ſome perſons, at ſome times, in ſome of theſe ways, for reaſons known to himſelf, even when their neceſſity (to their apprehenſion) calleth for ſuch acting of faith. Surely, every one dare not ſay, "Though he kill me, yet will I truſt in him." Many would not have gone up with the woman of Canaan I ſpake of, but would have been diſcouraged, and have quit the purſuit. It is on this account that Chriſt doth highly commend the faith of ſome beyond the faith of others; of the centurion; of the woman of Canaan. Many good people are much diſquieted concerning their faith, becauſe it goeth not out in all thoſe ways we find recorded in Scripture; but there is hardly any man will be found whoſe faith hath acted all theſe ways.

(2.) Many of theſe actings of faith are much intended and remitted. They are ſometimes ſtrong and vigorous, and diſcernible; and ſometimes they fail, and miſbelief doth prevail, ſo as it were an uncertain thing to judge of a man's ſtate by theſe. We find the ſaints very different from themſelves in regard of the actings of faith ſometimes, as we ſhewed before.

(3.) Each one of theſe actings of faith ſpeaketh good to the perſon in whom it is, and hath promiſes annexed unto it, as we have ſaid. Yet,

(4.) Although theſe actings of faith have promiſes annexed unto them, they are not, for that, the condition of the new covenant; for then every one behoved to have each one of them, which is not true, as we ſaid before. A promiſe is made to him who overcometh; but perſe-

verance is not the condition of the new covenant, but doth ſuppoſe it. There are promiſes made to the exerciſe of all graces in Scripture; but only faith is the condition of the covenant. I ſay then, theſe promiſes are made to theſe actings of faith, not as ſuch, but as they do ſuppoſe juſtifying faith, which is the condition of the covenant. All theſe are actings of faith, but not as it is juſtifying. Therefore,

(5.) There is ſomewhat common to all gracious perſons, which may be ſuppoſed by all the foreſaid actings of faith, wherein the nature and eſſence of juſtifying faith ſtandeth. And this is the heart's ſatisfaction concerning God's device of ſalvation by Chriſt; when man pleaſeth God's invention of ſatisfaction to juſtice, through Chriſt Jeſus, in whom all fulneſs doth dwell now by the Father's pleaſure; when the ſoul and heart of man acquieſceth in that, then it believeth unto ſalvation. As at firſt the Lord made man ſuitable to the covenant of works, by creating him perfect, and ſo putting him in a capacity to perform his will in that covenant; ſo, under the new covenant, when God giveth the new heart to man, he ſetteth the idea and ſtamp of all his device in the new covenant upon the man, ſo as there is a conſonancy to God's will there: thus he beareth the image of the ſecond Adam, Chriſt Jeſus, on him. This is a great part of the new heart, and is moſt oppoſed to works; ſince now the man abſolutely falleth off works, "becoming dead to the law, as to the point of juſtification, by the body of Chriſt." Man perceiving that God hath deviſed a way of ſatisfying divine juſtice, and recovering loſt man by the incarnation of Chriſt, he thinks this ſo good and ſure a way, that he abſolutely giveth up with the law, as I ſaid before, and cloſeth with this device; and this is believing or faith, very oppoſite to works, and all reſting thereupon. This cannot fail to be in all gracious perſons, in whom many of the actings of faith are not to be found. This doth clearly ſuppoſe known diſtreſs in a man, without all relief in himſelf; this ſuppoſeth known fulneſs in Chriſt, as the alone ſufficient re-

lief; this imports a ſort of impropriation; for the heart, pleaſing that device, in ſo far inclining towards it. This is a thing clearly ſuppoſed in all the actings of faith ſpoken of before. He that greedily hungereth, hath this; and he that leaneth, hath this; and he that puts on Chriſt, hath this, *&c.* This is to eſteem "Chriſt the wiſdom and power of God" to ſalvation; ſo is he ſaid to be to all that believe. They eſteem that device wiſe and ſure, beſeeming God; and that is to believe. On this account, "Chriſt, who is the rejected ſtone to many, is precious to them who believe;" a fit ſtone to recover, fortify, and beautify, the tottering building and fabrick of loſt man. "To whom coming, as unto a living ſtone, diſallowed indeed of men, but choſen of God, and precious. Ye alſo, as lively ſtones, are built up a ſpiritual houſe, an holy prieſthood, to offer up ſpiritual ſacrifices, acceptable to God by Jeſus Chriſt. Wherefore alſo it is contained in the Scripture, Behold I lay in Sion a chief Corner-ſtone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on him ſhall not be confounded. Unto you therefore which believe he is precious; but unto them which be diſobedient, the ſtone which the builders diſallowed, the ſame is made the head of the corner; And a ſtone of ſtumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which ſtumble at the word, being diſobedient, whereunto alſo they were appointed." "The kingdom of God is like a man finding a treaſure, for which with joy he ſelleth all." Theſe words hold out the very way of believing, *viz.* ſalvation is diſcovered in the goſpel to be by Chriſt; the heart valueth that invention as ſatisfying. This is to believe on the Son of God lifted up; which is compared with the looking to the brazen ſerpent. It was man's approbation of that device which made it effectual for his healing; ſo is it here, "He that ſo believeth, ſetteth "to his ſeal that God is true." True? Wherein? In that record he hath borne, that God hath proved life for men, and placed it all in Chriſt; "He that believeth not, maketh God a liar." Wherein? In his ſaying that Chriſt is a ſafe and ſure way to heaven. This is the

pleaſing and acquieſcing in that device; and it is conſonant to all I know ſpoken of juſtifying faith in Scripture. This is the believing on Chriſt and on his name, the receiving of him, and reſting on him, for ſalvation, in our *Catechiſm*; the believing that Jeſus is the Chriſt, that is, the anointed One, whom the Father hath ſealed, and ſet apart, and qualified for the work of reconciling man unto God; and "he that believeth that Jeſus is the Chriſt is born of God." This is to "believe with the heart that God hath raiſed Chriſt from the dead." The man believeth Chriſt died, and is raiſed on the account of ſatisfaction for man's tranſgreſſion. Devils may believe that: nay, but the man I ſpeak of "believeth it with "his heart," (which no natural man doth, until a new heart be given unto him); that is, he cordially pleaſeth, is ſatisfied with, and acquieſceth in, this noble invention. And thus faith layeth out itſelf now and then in its actings, outgoings, and exerciſe, according to all the covenant-relations under which Chriſt is held forth in the Scripture.

Now, I ſay, this faith is diſcernible, not only in theſe actings many times; a man may know if his heart doth hunger after Chriſt, and flee for refuge to him, when purſued; and if he doth commit himſelf unto God, but alſo in its very nature: as it is juſtifying, it is diſcernible, and may be known. A man may clearly know, if from known diſtreſs in himſelf, upon the report and fame of Chriſt's fulneſs, his heart doth pleaſe God's device in the new covenant; if it goeth out after Chriſt in that invention, and pleaſeth him as Lord of the life of men, terminating and reſting there, and no where elſe; acquieſcing in that contrivement with deſire and complacency. This is a deſcernible thing: therefore I entreat men impartially to examine themſelves; and if they find that their heart has cloſed ſo with that device of ſalvation, and is gone out after him as precious, that thereupon they conclude a ſure and true intereſt in Chriſt Jeſus, and a good claim and title to the crown; ſince "he that believeth ſhall never periſh, but have everlaſting life."

SECTION II.

The difference between the Faith of Hypocrites and true ſaving juſtifying Faith.

Object. HYPOCRITES and reprobates have a ſort of faith and are ſaid to believe: "Many believed in his name, when they ſaw the miracles which he did. But Jeſus did not commit himſelf unto them, becauſe he knew all men." "Then Simon the ſorcerer himſelf believed alſo," and cannot chuſe but go out after Chriſt, and that device of ſalvation, when they hear of it; and they profeſs they do ſo, yet are deluded, and ſo may I be.

Anſw. To ſay nothing of that thought of your heart, whereby you wonder that any man ſhould not pleaſe the device of ſalvation by Chriſt, and lead out towards him as a very promiſing thing, and ſpeaking out juſtifying faith to be in your boſom; and, to ſay nothing in contradiction to that which you think that a natural man, whilſt ſuch, and before he gets a new heart, can pleaſe that device, and believe with his heart, and affectionately, that which perfectly overthroweth the covenant of works, and abaſeth man in the point of ſelf-righteouſneſs already attained, or that can be attained to by him, which is inconſiſtent with many ſcriptural truths; I offer theſe differences between the faith of all hypocrites or reprobates and that true ſaving juſtifying faith whereof we have ſpoken.

1ſt. They never cloſe with Chriſt Jeſus in that device and him alone, as a ſufficient covering of the eyes, as is ſaid of Abraham to Sarah, they ſtill hold faſt ſomewhat of their own, at leaſt to help to procure God's favor and ſalvation: their heart doth ſtill ſpeak, as that young man's ſpeech, doth inſinuate, "What ſhall I do to inherit eternal life?" Beſide that, they do ſtill retain their former lovers, and will not break their covenants with hell and death, imagining they may have Chriſt with theſe things equally ſharing in their heart; contrary to that, "A man cannot ſerve two maſters." Either Chriſt

muſt be judged abſolute Lord, and worthy to be ſo, or nothing at all; and ſo it is clear their heart is not ſhapen out for that device of ſalvation by Chriſt, whom God hath alone made Lord here, in whom all fulneſs ſhall dwell. But where juſtifying faith is, the ſoul of a man and his heart doth cloſe with Chriſt, and him alone, "having no confidence in the fleſh," he truſteth only in God. Alſo the man here giveth up with other lovers; as they become rivals of Chriſt, he reſolves "not to be for another." He calls him Lord, "which a man can only do by the ſpirit of Chriſt."

2*dly*. As hypocrites and reprobates do never cloſe with Chriſt alone, ſo they do never cloſe with full Chriſt as he is anointed to be a king, to rule over a man in all things; a Prieſt, to procure pardon and to make peace for man upon all occaſions; a prophet, to be wiſdom, and a teacher and counſellor in all caſes to man; ſo they do not receive Chriſt, eſpecially in the firſt and third office. But where true juſtifying faith is, a man cloſeth with whole Chriſt in all his offices, judging all his "will good, holy, juſt and ſpiritual," and "right concerning all things," "making mention of his righteouſneſs only."

The man alſo giveth up himſelf to be taught of him; "Learn of me." So that "Chriſt is made to the true believer, with his own conſent, "wiſdom, righteouſneſs, ſanctification, and complete redemption." And although he hath not all theſe things formally in exerciſe when his heart goeth out after Chriſt, yet, upon ſearch and trial, it will be found with him, as I have ſaid.

3*dly*. Hypocrites and reprobates do never cloſe with Chriſt, and all the inconveniencies that may follow him; they ſtick at that with the ſcribe; but where true juſtifying faith is, a man doth cloſe with him on all hazards; he reſolveth to forego all rather than to forego Chriſt. "We have left all, and to have followed thee," "he reckoneth all to be loſs and dung for the excellency of Chriſt Jeſus, as his Lord, and to be found in him."

We might give other differences alſo; as that true faith is operative, "purifying the heart," "working by love," *Gal.* v. 6. whilſt "hypocrites do only cleanſe the outſide of the platter," and "do all to be ſeen of men," "not ſeeking the honour that is of God only and ſo cannot believe:" we might alſo ſhew that true faith is never alone in a man, but attended with other ſaving graces. But becauſe theſe things will coincide with what followeth, and here we are ſhewing that a man may take up his gracious ſtate by his faith, and the acting thereof on Chriſt, we paſs theſe things.

Chapter V.

OF THE NEW CREATURE.

THE *Second* great mark of a gracious ſtate and true ſaving intereſt in Jeſus Chriſt, is the new creature; "If any man be in Chriſt he is a new creature." This new creation, or renovation of that man, is a very ſenſible change; although not in thoſe who are effectually called from the womb, or in their younger years, (becauſe thoſe have had this new creature from that time in them, ſo as this change in after-periods of time is not diſcernible) yet in thoſe who have been regenerated and brought in to Chriſt after they were come to greater age, and ſo have more palpably been under the "power of darkneſs," before they were "tranſlated into the kingdom of Chriſt." But all who do warrantably pretend to Chriſt, this new creature muſt be; although ſome do not know experimentally the contraries of every part of it ſo as others do; becauſe they have not been equally in regard of practice under the power of darkneſs. This new creature is called *the new man*, which doth hold out the extent of it. It is not ſimply a new tongue or new hand, but *a new man*. There is a principle of new life and motion put in the man, which is the new

heart; which new principle of life ſendeth forth acts of life, or of "conformity to the image of him who created it," ſo as the party is renewed in ſome meaſure every way. This renovation of the man who is in Chriſt may be reduced into theſe two great heads.

Firſt, There is a renovation of the man's perſon, ſoul and body, in ſome meaſure.

1ſt. His underſtanding is renewed, ſo as he judgeth "Chriſt preached," in the goſpel to be "the wiſdom and power of God," a wiſe and ſtrong device beſeeming God: He knoweth the things of God really and ſolidly, not to be *yea and nay*, and uncertain fancies; but all to be *yea and amen*, ſolid, certain, ſubſtantial things, having a deſirable accompliſhment in Chriſt, and reſolving much in him; "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are fooliſhneſs unto him; neither can he know them, becauſe they are ſpiritually diſcerned: but he that is ſpiritual judgeth all things." "As God is true, our word toward you was not yea and nay. For the Son of God, Jeſus Chriſt, who was peached among you by us, even by me, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, was not yea and nay, but in him was yea. For all the promiſes of God in him are yea, and in him amen, unto the glory of God by us."—Natural men, educated under goſpel-ordinances, altho' they have ſome notional knowledge of God, Chriſt, the promiſes, the motions of the Holy Spirit, ſo as they may confer, preach, and diſpute of theſe things; yet they look on them as common received maxims of Chriſtianity, from which to recede were a ſingularity and diſgrace; but not as real, ſolid, ſubſtantial truths, ſo as to adventure their ſouls and everlaſting being on them. The underſtanding is renewed alſo, to take up ſomewhat of God in the creatures, as bearing ſparks of his glorious attributes; they ſee "the heavens declaring his glory and power," and ſomewhat of God in providence, and diſpenſations that fall out: "His wondrous works declare that his name is near." The underſtanding alſo taketh up the conditions and caſes of the ſoul other-

wiſe than it was wont to do; as we find the ſaints uſually ſpeaking in Scripture, "O my ſoul, thou haſt ſaid unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord;" "My ſoul ſaid, Thy face will I ſeek;" "Why art thou caſt down, O my ſoul?" "Return unto thy reſt, O my ſoul."

2dly. The heart and affections are renewed. The heart is made "a new heart, a heart of fleſh," capable of impreſſions, having a copy of his law ſtamped on it, and the fear of God put into it, whereby the man's duty becometh in a manner native and kindly to the man—It was before a *heart of ſtone*, void of the fear of God: The affections are renewed now: the love is renewed in ſome good meaſure; it goeth out after God; "I will love the Lord;" after his law, "O how love I thy law!" after thoſe who have God's image in them, "By this ſhall all men know that ye are my diſciples, if ye have love one to another." "We know that we have paſſed from death unto life, becauſe we love the brethren." This love to God's people is upon a pure account, as they are the children of God, and do keep his ſtatutes; it is "with a pure heart fervently;" and therefore it goeth towards all ſuch whom the man knoweth or apprehendeth to be ſuch; "I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts," in all caſes and conditions, even where there is nothing to beautify or commend but the image of God. And this love is ſo *fervent* many times, that it putteth itſelf out in all relations, ſo as a man ſeeketh a godly wife, a godly maſter, a godly ſervant, a godly counſellor, if he have to chuſe upon; "Mine eyes ſhall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he ſhall ſerve me." And "it is not quenched by many waters:" Many imperfections and infirmities, difference in opinion, wrongs received, will not altogether quench love. Alſo it is communicative of good according to its meaſure, and as the caſe of the poor godly requireth; "Thou art my Lord, my goodneſs extendeth not to thee, but to the ſaints; But whoſo hath this world's good, and ſeeth his brother have need,

and ſhutteth up his bowels of compaſſion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and ſhall aſſure our hearts before him." The man's hatred is alſo renewed, and is now bended againſt ſin; "I hate vain thoughts;" againſt God's enemies, as ſuch, "Do not I hate them that hate thee?" *&c.* The joy or delight is renewed, for it runneth towards God;—"Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I deſire beſides thee:" towards his law and will; "His delight is in the law of the Lord:" and towards the godly and their fellowſhip; "To the ſaints, in whom is all my delight." The ſorrow is turned againſt ſin which hath wronged Chriſt: "Looking to him whom they have pierced, they mourn." "The ſorrow is godly" there, and againſt what encroacheth upon God's honor. "They are ſorrowful for the ſolemn aſſembly, and the reproach of that is their burden." There is ſome renovation in all the affections, as in every other part of the ſoul pointing now towards God.

3*dly*. The very outward members of the man are renewed, as the Scripture ſpeaks, the tongue, the eye, the ear, the hand, the foot, ſo that "thoſe members which once were improved as weapons of unrighteouſneſs unto ſin, are now improved as weapons of righteouſneſs unto holineſs."

Secondly. A man who is in Chriſt is renewed in ſome meaſure in all his ways: "Behold, all things are become new." The man becometh new, 1*ſt*. In the way of his intereſt. He was upon *any good* before, though but apparent, and at beſt but external; "Many ſay, who will ſhew us any good?" but now his intereſt and buſineſs is, how to "be found in Chriſt," in that day, or how to be forthcoming to him, and "walk before him in the light of the living," which he would chuſe among all the mercies that fill this earth; "The earth, O Lord, is full of thy mercy, teach me thy ſtatutes." The intereſt of Chriſt alſo becometh the man's intereſt, as appeareth in

the ſong of Hannah, and in the ſong of Mary. It is ſtrange to ſee people newly converted, and having reached but the beginning of knowledge, concern and intereſt themſelves in the public matters of Chriſt's kingdom, ſo deſirous to have him riding proſperouſly, and ſubduing the people under him.

2*dly*. The man that is in Chriſt, is renewed in the way of his worſhip. He was wont to "ſerve God in the oldneſs of the letter," for the faſhion, anſwering the letter of the command in the outſide of duty, which one in whom the old man hath abſolute dominion can do; but now he worſhippeth God "in newneſs of ſpirit," in a new way, wherein he is "helped by the Spirit of God," beyond the reach of fleſh and blood. He "ſerveth now the true and living God, in ſpirit and in truth," having ſpiritual apprehenſions of God, and engaged in his very ſoul in that work, doing and ſaying truly and not feignedly when he worſhippeth; ſtill "deſiring to approach unto him as a living God," who heareth and ſeeth him, and can accept his ſervice. I grant he fails of this many times; yet I may ſay, ſuch worſhip he intendeth, and ſometimes overtaketh, and doth not much reckon that worſhip which is not ſo performed unto God; and the iniquity of his holy things is not the leaſt part of his burden and exerciſe. Such a worſhip natural men are ſtrangers unto, whilſt they babble out their vain-glorious boaſtings, like the Phariſee, "to an unknown God."

3*dly*. The man that is in Chriſt is renewed in the way of his outward calling and employment in the world; he now reſolveth to be about it, becauſe God hath commanded ſo; "Not ſlothful in buſineſs, fervent in ſpirit, ſerving the Lord;" and to eye God in it as the laſt end, "doing it to his glory;" and ſtudieth to keep ſome intercourſe with God in the exerciſe of his outward employments, as Jacob doth in his latter-will, "I have waited for thy ſalvation, O Lord;" and as Nehemiah did, "Then the King ſaid unto me, for what doſt thou make requeſt? So I prayed to the God of heaven;" ſo as the

man reſolveth to walk with God, and "ſet him always before him," wherein I deny not he faileth often.

4thly. He becometh new in the way of his relations; he becometh a more dutiful huſband, father, brother, maſter, ſervant, neighbor. "Herein doth he exerciſe himſelf to keep a conſcience void of offence towards men as well as towards God, becoming all things to all men."

5thly. He becometh new in the way of lawful liberties; he ſtudieth to make uſe of meat, drink, ſleep, recreations, apparel, with an eye to God, laboring not to come under the power of any lawful thing; "All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient; all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any;" nor to give offence to others in the uſe of theſe things. "For meat deſtroy not the work of God. All things indeed are pure; but it is evil for that man who eateth with offence. It is good neither to eat fleſh, nor to drink wine, nor any thing whereby thy brother ſtumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak. Let every one of us pleaſe his neighbor for his good to edification; not uſing liberty as an occaſion to the fleſh." Yea, he laboreth to uſe all theſe things as a ſtranger on earth, ſo as his moderation may appear; "Let your moderation be known unto all men." And ſome way he doth eye God as the laſt end in theſe things; "doing all to the glory of God:" ſo as we may ſay of that man, "Old things are much paſſed away, all things are," in ſome meaſure, "become new." He that is ſo a new creature is undoubtedly in Chriſt.

This renovation of a man in all manner of converſation, and this being under law to God in all things, is that "holineſs, without which no man ſhall ſee the Lord." Men may fancy things to themſelves, but unleſs they ſtudy to approve themſelves unto God in all well-pleaſing, and reach ſome inward teſtimony of ſincerity that way, they ſhall not aſſure their hearts before him. "The teſtimony of men's conſcience is their rejoicing. By this we know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. And hereby we know that we are of the

truth, and ſhall aſſure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God;" No confidence if the heart condemn. This is the new creature, having a principle of new ſpiritual life infuſed by God into the heart, whereby it becometh new, and putteth forth acts of new life throughout the whole man, as we have ſaid, ſo as he pointeth towards the whole law. 1. Towards theſe commands which forbid ſin; ſo he reſolveth to ſet againſt ſecret ſins, "not to lay a ſtumbling-block before the blind:" little ſins, which are judged ſo by many, the leaſt things of the law: "Whoſoever ſhall break one of theſe leaſt commandments, and ſhall teach men ſo, he ſhall be called the leaſt in the kingdom of heaven:" ſpiritual ſins, filthineſs of the ſpirit; "Having, therefore, theſe promiſes, dearly beloved, let us cleanſe ourſelves from all filthineſs of the fleſh and ſpirit, perfecting holineſs in the fear of God." Sins of omiſſion as well as of commiſſion, ſince men are to be judged by theſe, "Then ſhall he ſay unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye curſed, into everlaſting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: for I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat, I was thirſty, and ye gave me no drink." Yea, ſins that are winded in into his natural humour and conſtitution, and ſo are as "a right eye or hand" to him; "If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and caſt it from thee," &c. This new principle of life, by the good hand of God, maketh the man ſet againſt every known ſin, ſo far as not to allow peaceable abode to any known darkneſs; "What fellowſhip hath righteouſneſs with unrighteouſneſs? and what communion hath light with darkneſs?" 2. As alſo he pointeth towards thoſe commands which relate to duty, and the quickening of grace in man: it maketh a man "reſpect all God's known commands;" to "live godly, righteouſly, and ſoberly:" yea and to ſtudy a right and ſincere way and manner of doing things, reſolving not to give over this ſtudy of conformity to

God's will, whilſt he liveth on earth, but ſtill to "preſs forward toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Chriſt Jeſus." This is true holineſs, very becoming all thoſe who pretend to be heirs of that holy habitation, in the immediate company and fellowſhip of a holy God; "We know that when he ſhall appear, we ſhall be like him."

Some may think theſe things high attainments, and very hard to be gained. I grant it is true. But, *firſt* Remember that there is a very large allowance in the covenant promiſed to his people, which maketh things more eaſy. The Lord hath engaged "to take away the ſtoney heart, to give a heart of fleſh, a new heart, a heart to fear him forever;" he hath engaged to "put his law in men's heart: to put his fear in their heart to make them keep that law; to put his Spirit in them to cauſe them to keep it." He hath promiſed "to ſatisfy the prieſts with fatneſs," that the ſouls of "the people may be ſatiated with his goodneſs; and to keep and water them continually every moment." And if he muſt be "enquired to do theſe things unto men," he engageth to "pour out the ſpirit of grace and ſupplication on them," and ſo to learn them how to ſeek theſe things, how to put him to it, to do all for them.

Secondly, For the ſatisfaction of the weaker, I grant this new creature, as we have circumſcribed and enlarged it, will not be found, in all the degrees of it, in every gracious perſon. But it is well if,

1*ſt*. There be a new man. We cannot grant leſs; "If any man be in Chriſt, he is a new creature," and that is the new man, which all muſt put on who are ſavingly taught of Chriſt; "If ſo be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jeſus: That ye put off concerning the former converſation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful luſts: and be renewed in the ſpirit of your mind; and that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteouſneſs and true holineſs." There muſt be ſome renewing after the image of God in a man's ſoul

and body; there muſt be ſomewhat of every part of the man pointing towards God. Although I grant every one cannot inſtruct this to others, neither diſcern it in himſelf, becauſe many know not the diſtinct parts of the ſoul, nor pieces of reformation competent to every part of the ſoul and body; yet it will be found there is ſome ſuch thing in them, yea, they have a witneſs of it within them, if you make the thing plain and clear to them what it is.

2*dly*. There muſt be ſuch a reſpect unto God's known commands, that a man do not allow peaceably any known iniquity to dwell in him; for "what fellowſhip hath righteouſneſs with unrighteouſneſs? and what communion hath light with darkneſs?" He muſt not regard iniquity; "Then ſhall I not be aſhamed when I have reſpect unto all thy commandments." "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." I grant men may be ignorant of many commands and many ſins, and may imagine, in ſome caſes, that ſome ſins are not hateful unto God; but ſuppoſing that they are inſtructed in theſe things, there can be no agreement between righteouſneſs and unrighteouſneſs.

3*dly*. Men muſt point towards all the law of God in their honeſt reſolutions; for this is nothing elſe than to give up the heart unto God, to put his law in it without exception, which is a part of the covenant we are to make with God. "This is the covenant that I will make with the houſe of Iſrael—I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts." I grant many know not how to point towards God's law in all their ways; but if it be made manifeſt unto them how that ſhould be done, they will point at it. And it is true, they will many times fail of their reſolutions in their practice; yet when they have failed, they can ſay, they did reſolve otherwiſe, and will yet honeſtly, and without guile, reſolve to do otherwiſe, and it will prove their affliction to have failed of their reſolution, when the Lord diſcovereth it to them, which he will do in due time.

thly. When we are to judge of our ſtate by the new creature, we muſt do it at a convenient time, when we are in good caſe, at leaſt, not when we are in the worſt caſe; for "the fleſh and ſpirit do luſt and fight againſt other," and ſometimes the one and ſometimes the other doth prevail. Now, I ſay, we muſt chuſe a convenient time, when the ſpiritual part is not by ſome tentation worſted and overpowered by the fleſh; for in that caſe the new creature is recoiled back in its ſtreams, and much returned to the fountain and the habits, except in ſome ſmall things not eaſily diſcernible, whereby it maketh oppoſition to the fleſh, according to the foreſaid Scripture. For, now is it the time of winter in the ſoul, and we may not expect fruit, yea, not leaves, as in ſome other ſeaſon; only here, leſt profane Atheiſts ſhould make advantage of this will, we will ſay, that the ſpirit doth often prevail over the fleſh in a godly man, and yet the ſcope, aim, tenor, and main driſt of his way is in the law of the Lord, that is his *walk*; whereas the pathway and ordinary courſe of the wicked is ſin, as is often hinted in the book of the *Proverbs of Solomon*. And if it happen that a godly man be overmaſtered by any tranſgreſſion, ordinarily it is his ſad exerciſe; and we ſuppoſe he keeps it ſtill in dependency before God to have it rectified, as David ſpeaketh, "Wilt thou not deliver my feet from falling?"

Chapter VI.

The Difference betwixt a truly renewed Man who is in Chriſt and Hypocrites.

Object. ATHEISTS and hypocrites may have great changes and renovation wrought upon them, and in them, and I fear mine be ſuch.

Anſw. I grant that Atheiſts and hypocrites have many things in them which do look like the new creature.

Firſt. In regard of the parts of the man, they may, 1. Come to much knowledge, as "They are enlightened. 2. There may be a reel among their affections, as, "They receive the word with joy, as he that received the ſeed into ſtony places." 3 They may reach a great deal of outward reformation in the outward man, both concerning freedom from ſin, and engagement to poſitive duty, as that Phariſee did, "God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjuſt, adulterers, or even as this Publican: I faſt twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I poſſeſs." Yea, 4. In regard of their practical underſtanding, they may judge ſome things of God to be excellent; the officers ſaid, that "never man ſpake as Chriſt."

Secondly. Hypocrites may have a great deal of profeſſion. 1. They may talk of the law and goſpel, and of the covenant, as the wicked do; "What haſt thou to do to declare my ſtatutes, or that thou ſhouldſt take my covenant in thy mouth?" 2. They may confeſs ſin openly to their own ſhame, as King Saul did. 3. They may humble themſelves in ſackcloth with Ahab. 4. They may inquire buſily after duty, and come cheerfully to receive it; "Yet they ſeek me daily, and delight to know my ways, as a nation that did righteouſneſs, and forſook not the ordinance of their God; they aſk of me the ordinances of juſtice, they take delight in approaching to God." 5. They may join with God's intereſt in a hard and difficult time, as Demas and other hypocrites, in the Book of the *Acts of the Apoſtles*, who afterwards fell off. 6. They may give much of their goods to God and to the ſaints, as Ananias, if not all their goods; "Though I beſtow all my goods to feed the poor, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." Yea, 7. It is not impoſſible for ſome ſuch, being ſtraitly engaged in their credit, to "give their bodies to be burned," as in the laſt-cited place.

Thirdly. Hypocrites may advance far in the common and ordinary ſteps of a Chriſtian work; ſuch as the elect have when God leads them captive. As, 1. They may

be under great convictions of ſin, as Judas was: So was King Saul often. 2. They may tremble at the word of God, and be under much terror, as Felix was.— 3. They may "rejoice in receiving of the truth, as he that received the ſeed into ſtony places." 4. They may be in ſome peace and quiet, in expectation of ſalvation by Chriſt, as the fooliſh virgins were. 5. All this may be backed and followed with ſome good meaſure of reformation, as the Phariſee, "The unclean ſpirit may go out of them." 6. This work may ſeem to be confirmed by ſome ſpecial experiences and "taſtings of the good word of God."

Fourthly. Hypocrites may have ſome things very like the ſaving graces of the Spirit; as 1. They may have a ſort of faith with Simon Magus. 2. They may have a ſort of repentance, and may walk mournfully, "What profit is it that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hoſts? 3. They may have a great fear of God, ſuch as Balaam had, who, for a houſe-full of gold, would not go with the meſſengers of Balak, without leave aſked of God, and given. 4. They have a ſort of hope, "The hypocrite's hope ſhall periſh." 5. They have ſome love, ſo had Herod to John; I need not to inſiſt, it is out of all queſtion they have counterfeits of all ſaving graces.

Fifthly. They have ſomewhat like the ſpecial communications of God, and the witneſſing of his Spirit, and ſomewhat like "the powers of the world to come," powerfully on them, with ſome flaſhes of joy ariſing thence, as "For it is impoſſible "for thoſe who were once enlightened, and have taſted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghoſt, and have taſted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come; if they ſhall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance." Notwithſtanding of all which, they are but "almoſt perſuaded, with Agrippa, to be Chriſtians: It were tedious to ſpeak particularly to each of theſe things, and to clear it up, that they are all but rotten ware; I ſhall condeſcend upon ſome few things, wherein a truly re-

newed man, who is in Chriſt, doth differ from hypocrites and reprobates.

1ſt. Whatſoever change be in hypocrites, yet their heart is not changed and made new. The new heart is only given to the elect, when they are converted and brought under the bond of the covenant; "I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever. A new heart will I give you, and a new ſpirit will I put within you; and I will take away the ſtony heart out of your fleſh, and I will give you a heart of fleſh." Hypocrites did never apprehend Chriſt as the only ſatisfying good in all the world, for which with joy they would quit all; for then the kingdom of God were entered into them; "The kingdom of heaven is like unto treaſure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and ſelleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field." The truly renewed man dare, and can upon good ground ſay, and hath a teſtimony of it from on high, that his heart hath been changed in taking up of Chriſt, and hath been led out after him, as the only enriching treaſure, in whom "to be found he accounteth all things elſe loſs and dung."

2dly. Whatſoever reformation or profeſſion hypocrites do attain unto, as it cometh not from a new heart and pure principle of zeal for God, ſo it is always for ſome wicked and by-end, as "to be ſeen of men," or to evite and ſhun ſome outward ſtrait, to be free of God's wrath, and the trouble of their own conſcience—"Wherefore have we faſted, ſay they, and thou ſeeſt not? whorefore have we afflicted our ſoul, and thou takeſt no knowledge? What profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hoſts?" In teſtimony of this they never have reſpect to all known commands, elſe they ſhould "never be aſhamed;" nor do they, without approven guile in their own heart, reſolve againſt every known iniquity, elſe they were freed of heart-condemnings, and ſo might juſtly have "confidence before God." If in

never ſo mean a caſe they did, from a principle of love unto, and of zeal for Chriſt, and for a right end, confeſs and profeſs him, Chriſt were obliged by his own word "to confeſs them before his Father."

3*dly*. Whatſoever length hypocrites advance in that work, by which people are led in unto Chriſt, yet they never "ſeek firſt the kingdom of God and his righteouſneſs: The one thing that is neceſſary," *viz*. Chriſt's friendſhip and fellowſhip, is never their one thing and heart-ſatisfying choice, elſe that "better part would never be taken from them."

4*thly*. Whatſoever counterfeits of grace are in hypocrites, yet they are all bred there, without any ſaving work of the Spirit of Chriſt; and it is enough to exclude them from the benefit of this mark, that they are never denied to theſe things, nor emptied of them, but ſtill do reſt on them as their ſaviour, ſo that "they ſubmit not unto the righteouſneſs of God," and that is enough to keep them at a diſtance from Chriſt, who will never clout that old garment of hypocrites with his fine new linen, nor "put his new wine in theſe old bottles."

5*thly*. We may ſay, Let hypocrites, reprobates, or atheiſts, have what they can, they want the three great eſſentials of religion and true Chriſtianity. (1.) They are not broken in themſelves, and emptied even of their righteouſneſs, the length of ſelf-loathing, yet lying open for relief. Such "loſt ones Chriſt came to ſeek and ſave." (2.) They never took up Chriſt Jeſus as the only treaſure and jewel that can only enrich, and ſhould ſatisfy; and therefore have never cordially agreed unto God's device in the covenant, and ſo are not worthy of him; neither hath the kingdom of God ſavingly entered into their heart: "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treaſure hid in a field, the which when a man hath found, he hideth; and for joy thereof ſelleth all that he hath, and buyeth the field." (3.) They never in earneſt do cloſe with Chriſt's whole yoke without exception, judging all his "will juſt and good, holy and ſpiritual," and therefore no reſt followed on them by

Chriſt; "Take my yoke upon you, and ye ſhall find reſt unto your ſouls." Therefore, whoſoever thou art who can lay clear and juſt claim to theſe three foreſaid things, thou art beyond the reach of all atheiſts, hypocrites, and reprobates, in the world, as having anſwered the great ends and intents of the law and goſpel.

Object. I am clear ſometimes, I think, to lay claim to that mark of the new creature; yet at other times ſin doth ſo prevail over me, that I am made to queſtion all the work within me.

Anſw. It is much to be lamented that people profeſſing his name ſhould be ſo abuſed and enſlaved by tranſgreſſion as many are. Yet, in anſwer to the objection, if it be ſeriouſly propoſed, we ſay, the ſaints are found in Scripture juſtly laying claim unto God and his covenant when iniquity did prevail over them; as we find, *Pſalms* lxv. 3. "Iniquities prevail againſt me; as for our tranſgreſſions thou ſhalt purge them away." *Rom.* vii. 23, 25. Paul "thanks God through Chriſt, when a law in his members leads him captive unto ſin." But for the better underſtanding, and ſafe application, of ſuch truths, we muſt make a difference betwixt groſs outbreakings and ordinary infirmities or heart-ills, or ſins that come unawares upon a man, without forethought or any deliberation. As for the former ſort, it is hard for a man, whilſt he is under the power of them to ſee his gracious change, although it be in him: and very hard to draw any comfort from it, until the man be in ſome meaſure recovered, and begin ſeriouſly to reſent ſuch ſins, and to reſolve againſt them. We find David calling himſelf God's ſervant quickly after his nubering of God's people; but he was then under the ſerious reſentment of his ſin. Jonah layeth claim to God as his maſter under his rebellion; but he is then ruing it, and in a ſpirit of revenge againſt himſelf for his ſin. Next, as for theſe ſins of infirmity, and daily incurſion and heart-ills, ſuch as thoſe whereof Paul doth complain it is like were.

We ſhall draw out ſome things from that ſeventh chap-

ter to the *Romans*, whereupon Paul maintains his intereſt in Chriſt, and if you can apply them it is well. 1. When Paul findeth that he doth much fail, and cannot reach conformity to God's law, he doth not blame the law, as being too ſtrict, ſo as men cannot keep it, as hypocrites uſe to ſpeak; but he doth blame himſelf as being carnal; and he ſaith of the law, "that it is good, holy, and ſpiritual." 2. He can ſay, he failed of a good which he intended, and did outſhoot himſelf, and he had often honeſtly reſolved againſt the evil which he fell into. 3. He ſaith, that the prevailing of ſin over him is his exerciſe, ſo as he judgeth himſelf wretched becauſe of ſuch a body of death, from which he longeth to be delivered. 4. He ſaith that while he is under the power and law of ſin, there is ſomewhat in the bottom of his heart oppoſing it, although overmaſtered by it, which would be another way, and when that gets the upper hand it is a delightſome thing. Upon theſe things he "thanks God in Chriſt that there is no condemnation." Now then look if you can lay claim to theſe things. 1. If you do blame yourſelf, and approve the law, whilſt you fail. 2. If you can ſay, that you do often reſolve againſt ſin honeſtly, and without known guile; and do ſo reſolve the contrary good before the evil break in upon you. 3. If you can ſay, that you are ſo far exerciſed with your failings as to judge yourſelf wretched becauſe of ſuch things, and a body of death which is the root and fountain of ſuch things. 4. If you can ſay, that there is a party within you oppoſing theſe evils, which would be at the right way, and, as it were is its element when it is in God's way, it is well; only be adviſed not to take reſt, until in ſome good meaſure you be rid of the ground of this objection, or, at leaſt, until you can very clearly ſay, you are waging war with theſe things. Now, a good help againſt the prevailing power of ſin is to cleave cloſe to Chriſt Jeſus by faith, which, as it is a deſirable part of ſanctification, and a notable piece of conformity to God's will, and moſt ſubſervient unto his deſign in the goſpel, "the life which I

now live in the fleſh I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me, and gave himſelf for me. I do not fruſtrate the grace of God:" and ſo ſhould be much endeavored by people, as a work pleaſing unto God, "This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath ſent:" ſo it is the ready way to draw life and ſap from Chriſt the bleſſed root, for fruitfulneſs in all caſes, as *John* xv. 4, 5. "Abide in me, and I in you: as the branch cannot bear fruit of itſelf, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the ſame bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."

Chapter VII.

Of the Special Communication of God, and the ſingular gracious Operations of his Spirit.

Object. I DO not partake of theſe ſpecial communications of God mentioned in the Scripture, and actings and outgoings of his Spirit, whereof gracious people often are ſpeaking, and whereunto they attain.—The want of theſe things maketh me much ſuſpect my ſtate.

Anſw. I ſhall ſhortly hint ſome of theſe excellent communications; and I hope, upon a right diſcovery of them, there will be but ſmall ground found for the jealous complaints of many gracious people.

Firſt. (Beſide theſe convictions of the Spirit of God, which uſe to uſher Chriſt's way into the ſouls of men, and theſe alſo which afterwards do ordinarily attend them,) there is a ſeal of the Spirit of God ſpoken of in Scripture, the principal thing whereof is the ſanctifying work of the Holy Ghoſt, imprinting the draughts and lineaments of God's image and revealed will upon a man, as a ſeal or ſignet doth leave an impreſſion and

ſtamp of its likeneſs upon the thing ſealed. So it is, "The foundation of God ſtandeth ſure, having this ſeal, The Lord knoweth them that are his; and, Let every one that nameth the name of Chriſt depart from iniquity." And thus I conceive the ſeal to be called *a witneſs*; "He that believeth hath the witneſs in himſelf;" that is, the grounds, upon which an intereſt in Chriſt is to be made out and proved, are in every believer; for he hath ſomewhat of the ſanctifying work of God's ſpirit in him, which is a ſure, although not always a clear and manifeſt witneſs.

Secondly, There is *communion* with God, much talked of among Chriſtians, whereby they underſtand the ſenſible preſence of God refreſhing the ſoul exceedingly. But if we ſpeak properly, communion with God is a mutual intereſt between God and a man, who hath cloſed with him in Chriſt. It is a commoneſs, or a common intereſt, between God and a man; not only is a man intereſted in God himſelf, but in all that is the Lord's, ſo the Lord hath a ſpecial intereſt in the man, and alſo all that belongs to him. There is a communion between huſband and wife, whereby they have a ſpecial intereſt in other perſons, goods, money and concernments; ſo it is here: there is ſuch a communion with God, he is our God, and all things are ours, becauſe he is ours. This communion with God all true believers have at all times, as we ſhall ſhew afterwards. I grant there is an actual improvement of that communion, whereby men do boldly meddle with any thing that belongs unto God, and do meddle with himſelf, as their own with much homelineſs and familiarity: eſpecially in worſhip, when the ſoul doth converſe with a living God, partaking of the divine nature, growing like unto him, and ſweetly travelling through his attributes, and, with ſome confidence of intereſt, viewing theſe things as the man's own goods and money; this we call communion with God in ordinances. This indeed is not ſo ordinarily nor frequently made out to men, and all his people do

not equally partake of it: and it is true, that what is in God goeth not out for the behoof of the man to his apprehenſion equally at all times; yet certainly; communion with God properly, ſo called, viz. that commonneſs of intereſt between God and a man, who is ſavingly in covenant with him, doth always ſtand firm and ſure, and ſo much of communion with God in ordinances have all believers, as that their heart converſeth with a living God there, now and then, and is in ſome meaſure changed into that ſame image: and there needeth be no doubt about any further in it.

Thirdly, There is a thing which is called *fellowſhip* with God, often miſtaken alſo amongſt believers. If by fellowſhip be meant the walking in our duty, as in the ſight of a living God, who ſeeth and heareth us, and is witneſs to all our carriage, it is a thing common unto all gracious men; they all have it habitually, and in deſign, "I have ſet the Lord always before me." Yea, and often they have it actually in exerciſe, when their ſpirit is in any good frame; they walk as if they ſaw God ſtanding by them, and have ſome thoughts of his favour through Chriſt: "Truly our fellowſhip is with the Father and with his Son Jeſus Chriſt," If we by *fellowſhip* do mean a ſweet refreſhing, familiar, ſenſible converſing with God, which doth delight and refreſh the ſoul, beſide what the conſcience of duty doth; it is then a walking in the light of his countenance, and a good part of ſenſible preſence; and although it ſeemeth Enoch had much of it whilſt it is ſaid, "He walked with God," yet it is not ſo ordinary as the former, nor ſo common to all Chriſtians; for here the ſoul is filled with marrow and fatneſs, following hard after its guide, and ſingularly upheld by his right hand, "My ſoul ſhall be ſatisfied as with marrow and fatneſs; and my mouth ſhall praiſe thee with joyful lips. My ſoul followeth hard after thee, thy right hand upholdeth me."

Fourthly, There is a thing which is called *acceſs* unto God; and this I take to be the removing obſtructions

out of the way between a man and God, so as the man is admitted to come near. We are said to have access to a great person when doors are cast open, guards removed from about him, and we admitted to come close at him; so it is here. Now this access, in scripture, is sometimes taken for Christ's preparing of the way, the removing of enmity between God and sinners, so as men now have a patent way to come unto God through Christ; "For through him we both have an access by one spirit unto the Father." Sometimes it is taken for the actual improvement of that access purchased by Christ, when a man finds all obstructions and differences, which do ordinarily fall in between him and God, removed; God is not uncouth to him, nor as a stranger, keeping up himself from him, or frowning on him; but the man is admitted to "come even to his seat," as *Job* xxiii. 3. Of the want of this doth Job complain, *chap.* xxiii. 8, 9, whilst he saith, "I go forward, backward, to the right and left hand, and I find him not." The first sort of access is common to all believers: they are brought near by the blood of the covenant, and are no more far off, as the deadly enmity between God and them is removed: but access in the other sense is dispensed more according to the Lord's absolute sovereignty and pleasure, and it is left in the power of believers to obstruct it unto themselves, until it please the Lord mercifully and freely to grant it unto them again; so it is up and down, and there needs be no question as to a man's state about it.

Fifthly. There is a thing called *liberty* before God; and this properly is freedom, or free speaking unto God. Many do much question their state, because of the want of this now and then, since the scripture hath said—"Where the spirit is, there is liberty;" but they do unjustly confine that liberty spoken of there unto this free speaking before God. I grant, where the spirit of the Lord doth savingly discover God's will in the scriptures to a man, there is liberty from any obligation to the ce-

remonial law, and from the condemning power of the moral law, and from much of that groſs darkneſs and ignorance which is on natural hearts as a vail hiding Chriſt in the goſpel from them. I grant alſo, that ſometimes even this liberty, which is a free communing with God, and "ordering of our cauſe before him, and filling of our mouth with arguments," is granted to the godly, but not as liberty taken in the former ſenſes. Altho' the Lord hath obliged himſelf to "pour out the ſpirit of prayer upon all the houſe of David" in ſome meaſure, yet this communication of the ſpirit, which we call *liberty* or *free ſpeaking* unto God, dependeth much on the Lord's abſolute pleaſure, when, and in what meaſure to allow it. This liberty, which we call *freedom* or *free ſpeaking* with God in prayer, is ſometimes much abſtracted from any great confidence in the time of prayer, at leaſt, until it draw towards the cloſe of it; it ſtandeth much in a vivacity of the underſtanding to take up the caſe which a man is to ſpeak before God, ſo as he can order his cauſe: and next, there be words, or verbal expreſſions, elegant, ſuitable, and very emphatical, or powerful and pithy. There is alſo joined a fervency of ſpirit in prayer, whereof the ſcripture ſpeaketh; the ſoul is hot and bended, and very intent. There is alſo ordinarily in this liberty a ſpecial melting of the heart often joined with a great meaſure of the "ſpirit of grace and ſupplication." So the ſoul is poured out before God as for a firſt-born. Such is the liberty which many ſaints get before God, whilſt, in much brokenneſs of heart and fervency of ſpirit, they are admitted to ſpeak their mind fully to God, as a living God, noticing (at leaſt) their prayer. Sometimes this liberty is joined with confidence, and then it is not only a free, but alſo a bold, ſpeaking before God. It is that "boldneſs with confidence, in whom we have boldneſs and acceſs with confidence, by the faith of him. This is more rarely imparted unto men than the former, yet it is ordinary: it hath in it, beſide what we ſpake before, ſome influence

of the ſpirit upon faith, making it put out ſome vigorous acting in prayer. There is a ſweet mournful frame of ſpirit, by which a man poureth out his heart in God's boſom, and, with ſome confidence of his favor and good will, pleadeth his cauſe before him as a living God; and this is all the ſenſible preſence that many ſaints do attain unto. There is no ground of doubt concerning a man's ſtate in the point of liberty before God, in this laſt ſenſe, becauſe there is nothing eſſential to the making up of a gracious ſtate here; ſome have it, ſome want it, ſome have it at ſome times, and not at other times, ſo that it is much up and down; yet I may ſay, gracious men may do much, by a very ordinary influence, contributing towards the attaining and retaining, or keeping, of ſuch a frame of ſpirit.

Sixthly. There is a thing called *influence*, or breathing of the ſpirit. This gracious influence (for of ſuch only do I now ſpeak) is either ordinary; and this is the operations of the Holy Spirit on the ſoul, and the habits of grace there, whereby they are ſtill kept alive, and in ſome exerciſe and acting, although not very diſcernible. This influence, I conceive, doth always attend believers, and is that "keeping and watering night and day, and every moment," promiſed: or, this influence is more ſingular and ſpecial, and is that ſame to a gracious, although a withered ſoul, as the "wind and breath to the dry bones," putting them in good caſe, and "as the dew or rain to the graſs," or newly mown field and parched ground: Such influence is meant, by the "blowing of the ſouth-wind, making the ſpices to flow out." When the ſpirit moveth thus, there is an edge put upon the graces of God in the ſoul, and they are made to act more vigorouſly. This is the "enlarging of the heart," by which a "man doth run in the ways of God:" This influence is more diſcernible than the former, and not ſo ordinarily communicated. Alſo here, ſometimes the wind bloweth more upon one grace, and ſometimes more diſcernibly upon another, and often upon many

of the graces together; and, according to the leſſer or greater meaſure of this influence, the ſoul acteth more or leſs vigorouſly towards God: and ſince faith is a created grace in the ſoul, this influence of the ſpirit is upon it, ſometimes leſs, ſometimes more, and accordingly is the aſſurance of faith, ſmall or great.

Seventhly. There is the *hearing of prayer*, often ſpoken of in ſcripture; and many vex themſelves about it, alledging that they know nothing of it experimentally.—I grant, there is a favorable hearing of prayer; but we muſt remember it is twofold. Either (1.) It is ſuch as a man is ſimply to believe by way of argument on ſcriptural grounds: as if I be fled unto Chriſt, and do approach unto God in him, pray according to his will, not regarding iniquity in my heart, exerciſing faith about the thing I pray for abſolutely or conditionally, according to the nature of the thing and promiſes concerning it; I am obliged to believe that God heareth my prayer, and will give what is good, according to theſe ſcriptures—"Whatſoever ye aſk in my name, I will do it." "This is our confidence, that whatſoever we aſk according to his will, he heareth us." "Believe that ye receive, and ye ſhall have what ye deſire." "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear:" then if I regard not iniquity, I may believe that he doth hear me. Or, (2.) A man doth ſenſibly perceive that God heareth his prayer; it is made out to his heart, without any ſyllogiſtical deduction. Such a hearing of prayer got Hannah—"Her countenance was no more ſad." Surely the Lord did breathe upon her faith, and made her believe that ſhe was heard: ſhe could not make it out by any argument; for ſhe had not grounds whereupon to build the premiſes of the argument, according to ſcripture, in the particular: God did ſtamp it ſome way upon her heart ſenſibly, and ſo made her believe it. This is but rarely granted, eſpecially in caſes clearly deducible in ſcripture; therefore people are much to be ſatisfied in exerciſing their faith about the other, and ought to leave

it to God to give of this latter what he pleaſeth. A man's gracious ſtate ſhould not be brought upon debate upon the account of ſuch hearing of prayer.

Eighthly. There is *aſſurance* of God's favor by the witneſſing of our own ſpirits; which aſſurance is deduced by way of argument ſyllogiſtically thus: Whoſoever believeth on Chriſt ſhall never periſh: but I do believe on Chriſt; therefore I ſhall never periſh. Whoſo hath reſpect unto all God's commandments ſhall never be aſhamed: but I have reſpect unto all his commands; therefore, I ſhall never be aſhamed. I ſay, by reaſoning thus, and comparing ſpiritual things, a man may attain unto a good certainty of his gracious ſtate. It is ſuppoſed, "That by loving the brethren in deed and in truth, we may aſſure our hearts before God—And that a man may rejoice upon the teſtimony of a good conſcience. A man may have confidence towards God, if his heart do not condemn him"—We may then attain unto ſome aſſurance, although not full aſſurance, by the witneſs of our own ſpirits. I do not deny, that in this witneſſing of our ſpirits towards aſſurance there is ſome concurrence of the ſpirit of God: but, I conceive, there needeth but a very ordinary influence, without which we can do nothing. Now, this aſſurance, ſuch as it is, may be reached by intelligent believers, who keep a good conſcience in their walk. So, I hope, there needs be no debate about it, as to a man's gracious ſtate; for if a man will clear himſelf of heart condemnings, he will ſpeedily reach this aſſurance.

Ninthly, There is a "witneſſing of God's ſpirit," mentioned "bearing witneſs with our ſpirit, that we are the children of God." This operation of the Spirit is beſt underſtood, if we produce any ſyllogiſm by which our ſpirit doth witneſs our ſonſhip; as for example, Whoſoever loveth the brethren is paſſed from death to life, and conſequently is in Chriſt: but I love the brethren; therefore I am paſſed from death to life. Here, there is a threefold operation of the ſpirit, or three operations rather: The

firſt is a beam of divine light upon the firſt propoſition, perſuading the divine authority of it, as the word of God. The ſpirit of the Lord muſt witneſs the divinity of the ſcripture, and that it is the infallible word of God, far beyond all other arguments that can be uſed for it. The ſecond operation is a glorious beam of light from the ſpirit, ſhining upon the ſecond propoſition, and ſo upon his own graces in the ſoul, diſcovering them to be true graces, and ſuch as the ſcripture calleth ſo. Thus we are ſaid to "know by his ſpirit the things that are freely given unto us of God." The third operation is in order to the third propoſition of the argument, or the concluſion, and this I conceive to be nothing elſe but an influence upon faith, ſtrengthening it to draw a concluſion of full aſſurance upon the aforeſaid premiſes.

Now, (with ſubmiſſion unto others, who have greater light in the ſcripture, and more experience of theſe precious communications) I do conceive the witneſs of the ſpirit, or witneſſing of it, which is mentioned *Rom.* viii. 16. "The ſpirit itſelf beareth witneſs with our ſpirit that we are the children of God," is not that firſt operation upon the firſt propoſition; for that operation is that teſtimony of the ſpirit by which he beareth witneſs to the divinity of the whole ſcripture, and aſſerteth the divine authority of it unto the ſouls of gracious men: and ſuch an operation may be upon a truth of ſcripture, which doth not relate to a man's ſonſhip or intereſt in Chriſt at all. The ſpirit may ſo ſhine upon any truth, relating to duty, or any other fundamental truth, perſuading the divinity of it upon and unto the ſoul, and ſpeak nothing relating to a man's intereſt in Chriſt. Neither is the third operation of the ſpirit by which he makes faith boldly draw the concluſion, this witneſſing of the ſpirit; for that operation is nothing elſe but an influence upon faith, bringing it out to full aſſurance: but that whereupon this full aſſurance is drawn or put out is ſomewhat deponed and witneſſed already; therefore I conceive the ſecond operation of the

ſpirit upon the ſecond propoſition, and ſo upon thoſe graces, in the man, is that witneſs of God's ſpirit, that beam of divine light ſhining upon thoſe graces, whereby they are made very conſpicuous to the underſtanding. That is the witneſs, the ſhining ſo on them is his witneſſing: for only here, in this propoſition and this operation, doth the ſpirit of God prove a co-witneſs with our ſpirit: for the main thing wherein the witneſs of our ſpirit lyeth is in the ſecond propoſition, and ſo the ſpirit of God witneſſing with our ſpirits is alſo in that ſame propoſition. So theſe two witneſſes having deponed and witneſſed one and the ſame thing, *viz.* the truth and reality of ſuch and ſuch graces in the man, with our own ſpirit or conſcience doth depone, according to its knowledge, and the ſpirit of the Lord doth certainly affirm and witneſs to be ſo; there is a ſentence drawn forth, and a concluſion of the man's ſonſhip by the man's faith breathed upon by the ſpirit for that effect: and this concluſion beareth the full aſſurance of a man's ſonſhip.—It may be preſumed, that ſome true ſaints do not partake of this all their days, as *Heb.* ii. 14. "And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime ſubject to bondage."

Tenthly, I ſpeak with the experience of many ſaints, and I hope according to Scripture, if I ſay there is a communication of the ſpirit of God which is let out to ſome of his people ſometimes, that is ſomewhat beſide, if not beyond, that witneſſing of a ſonſhip ſpoken of before. It is a glorious divine manifeſtation of God unto the ſoul, ſhedding abroad God's love in the heart. It is a thing better felt than ſpoken of. It is no audible voice, but it is a flaſh of glory filling the ſoul with God, as he is life, light, love, and liberty, countervailing that audible voice, "O man, greatly beloved," putting a man in a tranſport with this on his heart, "It is good to be here," as *Mat.* xvii 4. It is that which went out from Chriſt to Mary, when he but mentioned her name, "Jeſus ſaith unto her, Mary. She turned herſelf, and ſaith

unto him, Rabboni, which is to ſay, Maſter," He had ſpoken ſome words to her before, and ſhe underſtood not that it was he: but when he uttereth this one word, MARY, there was ſome admirable divine conveyance and manifeſtation made out unto her heart, by which ſhe was ſo ſatisfyingly filled, that there was no place for arguing and diſputing whether or no that was Chriſt, and if ſhe had any intereſt in him. That manifeſtation made faith to itſelf, and did purchaſe credit and truſt to itſelf, and was equivalent with "Thus ſaith the Lord." This is ſuch a glance of glory that it may in the higheſt ſenſe be called, *the earneſt* or firſt-fruits of the inheritance, for it is a felt armful of the holy God, almoſt wholly conforming the man unto his likeneſs, ſo ſwallowing him up, that he forgetteth all things except the preſent manifeſtation. O how glorious is this manifeſtation of the ſpirit! faith here riſeth to ſo full an aſſurance, that it reſolveth wholly into ſenſible embracements of God. This is the thing which doth beſt deſerve the title of *ſenſible preſence*, and, it is like, is not given unto all believers, ſome whereof are all their days under bondage, and in fear; but here, "love, almoſt perfect, caſteth out fear. This is ſo abſolutely let out upon the Maſter's pleaſure, and ſo tranſient and paſſing, or quickly gone, when it is, that no man may bring his gracious ſtate upon debate for want of it.

Eleventhly, There is a thing we call *peace*, about which many do vex themſelves. This peace is either concerning a man's ſtate, that he is reconciled unto God by Jeſus Chriſt, or it is concerning his preſent caſe and condition, that he is walking ſo as approven of God, at leaſt, ſo far as there is no quarrel or controverſy between God and him threatening a ſtroke. Both of theſe are either ſuch in the court of ſcripture, and conſequently in God's account; or in the court of a man's own conſcience. Peace concerning a man's ſtate, as being in Chriſt, is ſure in the court of ſcripture and of heaven, when a man doth by faith cloſe with Chriſt and the new

covenant. "Being juſtified by faith, we have peace with God." It being ſure and ſolid in the court of ſcripture, it ſhould hold ſure in the court of a man's conſcience, it being rightly informed; for in that caſe it ſtill ſpeaks according to ſcripture: but, becauſe often the conſcience is miſinformed and in the dark, therefore there is often peace concerning a man's ſtate according to ſcripture, whilſt his conſcience doth threaten the contrary, and doth ſtill condemn, and refuſeth to aſſoil the man, as being reconciled unto God through Chriſt. In this caſe the conſcience muſt be informed, and the man's gracious ſtate made out by the marks of grace, as we ſhewed before; and here the witneſs of my own ſpirit will do much to allay the cry of the conſcience; and if the ſpirit of the Lord join his witneſs and teſtimony, the conſcience is perfectly ſatisfied, and proclaimeth peace to the man.

The other peace concerning a man's preſent caſe or condition, *viz.* that it is approven of God in a goſpel-ſenſe, it may be wanting, and juſtly wanting, although the peace concerning a man's ſtate be ſure. This peace concerning a man's caſe and condition is either ſuch in the court of ſcripture; and this is when a man is not regarding iniquity, and reſpecting the commands of God without exception: then the ſcripture ſaith, he ſtands in an even place, and he needeth fear no ſtated quarrel between God and him in order to a temporary ſtroke; and when it is thus, his conſcience ſhould alſo aſſoil him that ſame way, and would do ſo, if it were rightly informed: but becauſe the conſcience is often in the dark, therefore a man may be alarmed with evil in the court of conſcience, as if he were juſtly to expect a ſtroke from God becauſe of his ſin, and ſome quarrel God hath at him, although he intend ſalvation for him. This is enough to keep a man in diſquiet, and to inhibit him the rejoicing allowed unto him, whilſt he is walking in his integrity: therefore a man muſt here alſo inform his conſcience, and receive no accuſations nor condemnings from it, un-

leſs it make them clear by ſcripture. At that bar let every man ſtand, both concerning his ſtate and his condition or caſe: and let him appeal from all other courts to that, and not receive any indictment but conform to the truth of God, by which the conſcience is to proceed in all things. And if this were well looked unto, there would not be ſo many groundleſs ſuſpicions amongſt the Lord's people, either concerning their ſtate or their condition, upon every thought which entereth their mind.

Twelfthly, There is the joy of the Holy Ghoſt: and this is when the ſpirit doth breathe upon our rejoicing in God, (which is a grace very little in exerciſe with many) and maketh it ſet out ſenſibly and vigorouſly; and he exciteth and ſtirreth the paſſion of joy and of delight in the ſoul, ſo as there is an "unſpeakable and glorious joy in ſoul," in the apprehenſion of God's friendſhip and nearneſs unto him. "In whom, though now ye ſee him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unſpeakable and full of glory." This joy followeth upon peace, and peace followeth righteouſneſs. "The kingdom of God, is righteouſneſs, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghoſt." This joy readily will not fail to be according to the meaſure of the aſſurance of faith, as 1 *Pet.* i. 8. "In whom believing ye rejoice." So that the removal of miſtakes about other things will allay doubts concerning this.

Now, becauſe ſome of theſe excellent communications of the ſpirit, after they are gone, are brought in queſtion as deluſions of Satan; for vindication of them, we ſay, that the ſpecial operations of God's ſpirit in any high degree, uſually are communicated to people after ſuch brokenneſs of ſpirit; "Make me to hear joy and gladneſs, that the bones which thou haſt broken may rejoice:" after ſo ſingular pains in religious duty; "And I ſet my face unto the Lord God, to ſeek by prayer and ſupplication, with faſting, and ſackcloth, and aſhes.—And whiles I was ſpeaking, and praying, and confeſſing my ſin—the man Gabriel, whom I had ſeen in the viſion at the beginning, being cauſed to fly ſwiftly, touch-

ed me :" or in time of ſuch ſuffering for righteouſneſs ; " Rejoice, in as much as ye are partakers of Chriſt's ſufferings ; that when his glory ſhall be revealed, ye may be glad alſo with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Chriſt happy are ye ; for the ſpirit of glory and of God reſteth upon you :" or if they break in as the rain that waiteth not for man, then they do ſo humble and abaſe the perſon ; " Woe is me, for I am undone, becauſe I am a man of unclean lips—for mine eyes have ſeen the King, the Lord of hoſts :" and there are found ſo many evidences of grace in the man. " The Spirit itſelf beareth witneſs with our ſpirit, that we are the children of God :" or theſe things do ſo provoke unto holineſs, and to have every thing anſwerable and conform unto theſe manifeſtations of God : " Let every one that nameth the name of Chriſt depart from iniquity." The perſon under them doth ſo loathe all things beſide God's friendſhip and fellowſhip ; " Peter ſaid unto Jeſus, Lord, it is good for us to be here :" and theſe things do carry on them ſo much authority and divine ſuperſcription, whilſt they are in the ſoul, that afterwards they may appear ſufficiently to be ſpecial communications of God, and ſingular gracious operations of his Spirit, and no deluſions of " Satan transforming himſelf into an angel of light," nor ſuch common flaſhes of the ſpirit as may admit afterwards irrecoverable apoſtacy from God ; " For it is impoſſible for thoſe who were once enlightened, and have taſted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the holy Ghoſt, and have taſted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come ; if they ſhall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance."

Now then to conclude this part of the work that relateth unto trial ; I ſay to all theſe who complain of the want of the precious out-letting of the ſpirit, *1ſt*, Bleſs God if you want nothing eſſential for making out of a ſaving intereſt in Chriſt. God hath given unto you Chriſt Jeſus, the greateſt gift he had ; and ſince your

heart is ſhapen out of him, he will, with him give you all things that are good for you in their ſeaſon. *2dly*, I do believe, upon a right ſearch and trial, after you have underſtood the communications of the Spirit, you are not ſo great a ſtranger to many things as you did ſuſpect yourſelf to be. But, *3dly*, Remember the promiſes of life and of peace with God are no where in ſcripture made unto theſe ſpecial things whereof you alledge the want: the promiſes are made unto faith, followed with holineſs; and it may be preſumed, that many heirs of glory do not in this life partake of ſome of theſe things, but are "in bondage all their days through fear of death," ſo that there ſhould be no miſtake about theſe things; we may ſeek after them, but God is free to give or withhold them. *4thly*, Many do ſeek after ſuch manifeſtations before they give credit by faith unto God's word. He hath borne record that there is life enough for men in Chriſt Jeſus; and if men would by believing ſet to their ſeal that God is true, they ſhould partake of more of theſe excellent things. *5thly*, I may ſay, many have not honourable apprehenſions and thoughts of the Spirit of God, whoſe proper work it is to put out the foreſaid noble operations. They do not adore him as God, but vex, grieve, quench, and reſiſt him; and many people complaining of the want of theſe things, are not at the pains to ſeek the ſpirit in his outgoings, and few do ſet themſelves apart for ſuch precious receipts: therefore, be at more pains in religion, give more credit to his word, and eſteem more highly of the ſpirit of God and ſo you may find more of theſe excellent things.

HOW TO ATTAIN UNTO A SAVING INTEREST IN CHRIST.

PART II.

HAVING, in the former part of this treatiſe, put every man's ſtate to trial, it now remains that in this following part, we give advice to thoſe, who neither can nor dare lay claim to the marks formerly mentioned.

QUESTION II....*What ſhall they do who want the marks of a true and ſaving intereſt in* CHRIST *already ſpoken of, and neither can nor dare pretend unto them?*

ANSWER....If men miſs in themſelves the marks of a ſaving intereſt in Chriſt, ſpoken of before, then it is their duty and of all that hear this goſpel, perſonally and heartily to cloſe with God's device of ſaving ſinners by Chriſt Jeſus, and this ſhall ſecure their ſtate.

Chapter I.

Some Things premiſed for the Information of thoſe who are more Ignorant.

FOR the better underſtanding of this we ſhall premiſe ſome things for information of thoſe who are more ignorant, and then ſpeak more directly to the thing. As for the things to be premiſed:

1*ſt*. The Lord did, at the beginning, out of his bounty, make a covenant with man in Adam, and did enable man to abide in that covenant: "God hath made man upright;" but man, by eating of that forbidden fruit,

did break that covenant: "They, like Adam, have tranſgreſſed the covenant," and made it void for ever: "By the deeds of the law there ſhall no fleſh be juſtified in his ſight;" and involved himſelf into all miſery thereby: "As by one man ſin entered into the world, and death by ſin; and ſo death paſſed upon all men, for that all have ſinned."

2*dly*. The Lord did moſt freely, from everlaſting, purpoſe and intend to ſave men another way, *viz*. by Chriſt Jeſus, and the covenant of grace, in which he intended reconcilement with the elect through Chriſt Jeſus, God and man, born of a woman in due time, to make this agreement effectual. And this device of ſatisfying his own juſtice, and ſaving of the elect by Chriſt, he did at firſt intimate to our parents in Paradiſe, where he ſaith, "That the Seed of the woman ſhall bruiſe the ſerpent's head." And the Lord hath in all generations made this known to his church.

3*dly*. The Lord hath in all ages covenanted to be the reconciled God of all theſe, who by their ſubjection to his ordinances did profeſs their ſatisfaction with this device, and oblige themſelves to acquieſce in the ſame, and to ſeek ſalvation by Chriſt Jeſus, as God doth offer him in the goſpel; ſo all the people of Iſrael are called the Lord's people, and are ſaid to avouch him to be their God, and he doth avouch them to be his people: Yea, the Lord doth alſo engage himſelf to be the God of the ſeed and children of thoſe who do ſo ſubject themſelves to his ordinances. The covenant is ſaid to be made between God and all the people, young and old, preſent and not preſent that day; and all are appointed to come under ſome ſeal of that covenant, as was enjoined to Abraham: Not only was it ſo in the Old Teſtament, but it is ſo in the New Teſtament alſo. The Lord makes offer of himſelf to be our God in Chriſt Jeſus; and the people profeſſing their ſatisfaction in that offer, and in teſtimony thereof ſubjecting themſelves unto the ordinances, they are reckoned a covenanted people, and

are joined unto his church in thouſands, receiving a ſeal of the covenant, without any further particular previous trial: "Then Peter ſaid unto them, Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jeſus Chriſt, for the remiſſion of ſins. Then they that gladly received the word were baptiſed; and the ſame day there were added unto them about three thouſand ſouls."

4thly. Many do deal treacherouſly with God in this covenant; "Nevertheleſs, they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues; for their heart was not right with him, neither were they ſtedfaſt in his covenant." And although they profeſs their eſtimation of Chriſt the Saviour, and their heart ſatisfaction with that device of ſaving ſinners by him, and having the image of God reſtored by him in them: yet their heart is not right with God, and they do content themſelves with an empty title of being in a ſealed covenant with God; "Abraham is our father," ſay they. For although the Lord obligeth every man, who profeſſeth his ſatisfaction with Chriſt Jeſus, the deviſed ranſom, to be cordial and ſincere herein: and only to theſe who are ſo doth he make out the ſpiritual promiſes of the covenant, they only being "privileged to be the ſons of God who do really receive Chriſt," yet the Lord doth permit many to profeſs their cloſing with him in Chriſt, both in the Old and New Teſtament, whilſt their heart is not engaged: and he doth admit them to be members of his church, granting unto them the uſe of ordinances, and many other external mercies and privileges denied unto the heathen, who are not in covenant with him.

5thly. Although the greater part of the people do fooliſhly fancy, that they have cloſed with God in Chriſt Jeſus ſincerely and heartily; or, at leaſt, they do, without any ground or warrant, promiſe a new heart to themſelves before they depart this life; yet there be but very few who do really and cordially cloſe with God in Chriſt Jeſus, as he is offered in the goſpel; and ſo

there be but very few ſaved; as is clear, "Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be who find it." "Many are called, but few are choſen." If people would believe this, it might help to alarm them.

6thly. Although none at all do cordially cloſe with God in Chriſt Jeſus, and acquieſce in that ranſom found out by God, except only ſuch as are elected; "But the election hath obtained it, and the reſt were blinded:" and whoſe hearts the Lord doth ſovereignly determine to that bleſſed choice; "No man can come unto me, except the Father which hath ſent me draw him;" yet the Lord hath left it as a duty upon people who hear this goſpel, to cloſe with his offer of ſalvation through Chriſt Jeſus, as if it were in their power to do it: and the Lord, through theſe commands and exhortations, wherein he obligeth men to the thing, doth convey life and ſtrength to the elect, and doth therein convey the new heart unto them, which pointeth kindly towards this new device of ſaving ſinners, and towards Chriſt in his covenant relations; or, it is the Lord's mind, in theſe commands and invitations, to put people on ſome duty, with which he uſeth to concur for accompliſhing that buſineſs between him and them: ſo then, it is a *coming* on our part, and yet a *drawing* on his part, *John* vi. 44; it is a *drawing* on his part, and a *running* on our part, *Cant.* i. 4; it is an *approaching* on our part, and yet a "cauſing and cauſing to approach on his part," *Pſal.* lxv. 4: it is a *believing* or *receiving* on our part, *John* i. 12, and yet "it is given us to believe," *Phil.* i. 29.

Chapter II.

SECTION I.

What it is to cloſe with God's Device of ſaving Sinners by Chriſt Jeſus, and that it is a neceſſary Duty.

HAVING premiſed theſe things, I ſay If men miſs in themſelves the marks of a ſaving intereſt in Chriſt, ſpoken of in the former part of the treatiſe; then for ſecuring their ſtate, they are obliged, with all diligence, perſonally and heartily to accept of and cloſe with God's device of ſaving ſinners by Chriſt Jeſus, held out in the goſpel.

In handling of this, we ſhall, 1*ſt* Shew what it is to accept of and cloſe with that noble invention. 2*dly*, We ſhall ſhew that it is the neceſſary duty of thoſe who would be in favor with God, and ſecure their ſouls. 3*dly*, What is previouſly required of thoſe who perform this duty. 4*thly*, What are the qualifications and properties of this duty, if rightly managed. 5*thly*, What be the native conſequences of it, if it be performed aright.

As for the *firſt*, What it is to cloſe with God's device of ſaving ſinners by Chriſt Jeſus, held out in the goſpel. Here we muſt remember, as we ſhewed before, that at firſt God willed man to abide in his favour, by holding faſt his firſt integrity in which he was created; but man by his tranſgreſſion loſt God's favour, made void that covenant of works, and put himſelf in an utter incapacity to regain the Lord's friendſhip, which he had loſt by his ſin, and to reſcue himſelf from the curſe and wrath now due to him for the ſame, or any way to procure his own ſalvation: but the Lord freely hath manifeſted another way of repairing man's loſt eſtate, *viz.* by ſending his Son Chriſt Jeſus in the fleſh, to ſatisfy his juſtice for the ſins of the elect, and to reſtore in them his image now defaced, and to bring them unto glory: and he hath made open proclamation in the

church, that whoever will lay aſide all thoughts of ſaving themſelves by the covenant of works, or inherent righteouſneſs, and will agree heartily to be ſaved by Chriſt Jeſus, they ſhall be reſtored to a better condition than formerly man was in, and ſhall be ſaved. So then, to cloſe with God's device of ſaving ſinners by Chriſt Jeſus is to quit and forego all thoughts of help of ſalvation by our own righteouſneſs, and to agree unto this way which God hath found out; it is to value and highly eſteem of Chriſt Jeſus as the treaſure ſufficient to enrich poor man, and with the heart to believe this record, that there is life enough in him for men; it is to pleaſe this invention, and to acquieſce in it as the only way to true happineſs; it is to point towards this mediator, as God holdeth him out in the goſpel, with deſire to lay the ſtreſs of our whole ſtate on him. This is that which is called *faith* or *believing*, the "receiving of Chriſt," or "believing on his name." This is that "believing on the Lord Jeſus Chriſt," commanded unto the jailor for his ſafety; this agreeth to all the deſcriptions of juſtifying faith in the ſcripture. This doth anſwer the type of "looking to the brazen ſerpent lifted up in the wilderneſs," and this is ſuppoſed in all theſe ordinary actings of faith to which promiſes are annexed in the ſcripture; and will be found in all who have got the new heart from God, and it will be found in none elſe.

As to the *Second* thing, *viz.* That this is the neceſſary duty of all ſuch who would be in favor with God, and ſecure their ſouls; it appeareth thus:

1*ſt.* This cloſing with God's device, or believing in Chriſt, is commanded every where in Scripture by the Lord as the condition of the new covenant, giving title and right unto all the ſpiritual bleſſings of the ſame; for it is, upon the matter, the receiving of Chriſt. This is commanded, whilſt God bids men "come and buy," that is, impropriate all, by cloſing with that device; The *weary* are commanded to come unto him thus for their reſt, "This is his commandment, that we ſhould believe

on the name of his Son Jeſus Chriſt;" this is enough to prove it a duty incumbent. But further, it is ſuch a duty as only giveth title and right to a ſonſhip: for only they who receive him are privileged to be ſons, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the ſons of God, even to them that believe on his name."

2*dly*. It appeareth to be the neceſſary duty of all thus. —No leſs than this doth give a meeting unto God, offering himſelf to be our God in Chriſt; and no leſs than this doth anſwer our profeſſion, as we are in covenant with him, as members of his viſible church. The Lord offereth to be our God in Chriſt; if we do not cloſe with the offer, laying aſide all thoughts of other ways by which we may attain to happineſs, we give no meeting to him. He ſaith, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleaſed; hear ye him:" If we cloſe not with the offer, we give no anſwer unto God. Moreover, we are all "baptiſed in the name of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, for the remiſſion of ſins," now, unleſs we cloſe with Chriſt as ſaid is, we falſify that profeſſion; therefore, ſince this is the thing which doth anſwer God's offer in the goſpel, and maketh good our profeſſion as members of his church, it is a neceſſary duty lying upon us.

3*dly*. Whatſoever a man hath elſe, if he do not thus cloſe with God's device concerning Chriſt Jeſus, and do not receive him, it doth not avail, either as to the accepting of his perſon, or of his performances, or as to the ſaving of his ſoul. Men are *accepted* only in Chriſt the Beloved, Abel and his offering are accepted by faith; "Without faith it is impoſſible to pleaſe God;" and "He that believeth not is condemned already, and ſhall not ſee life; but the wrath of God abideth on him." For want of this no external title doth avail: "the children of the kingdom are caſt out," if this be wanting. The people of Iſrael are like other Heathens, in regard of a graceleſs ſtate, lying open to the wrath of God; "Behold, the days come, ſaith the Lord, that I will puniſh all them which are circumciſed with the uncircumciſed, Egypt,

and Judah, and Edom: for all theſe nations are uncircumciſed, and all the houſe of Iſrael are uncircumciſed in the heart." If men do not believe that he who was ſlain at Jeruſalem, who was called Chriſt Jeſus, and witneſſed unto by the prophets, and declared to be the Son of God by many mighty works; I ſay, if men do not believe that he is the way, and cloſe not with him as the only way, they ſhall die in their ſins; "I ſaid therefore "unto you, that ye ſhall die in your ſins; for if ye believe not that I am he, ye ſhall die in your ſins."

We ſay then, it is a moſt neceſſary duty thus to cloſe with Chriſt Jeſus, as the bleſſed relief appointed for ſinners. Every one who is come to years of underſtanding, and heareth this goſpel, is obliged to take to heart his own loſt condition, and God's gracious offer of peace and ſalvation through Chriſt Jeſus, and ſpeedily to flee from the wrath to come, by accepting and cloſing with this offer, heartily acquieſcing therein as a ſatisfying way for ſaving of poor ſinners. And, that all may be the more encouraged to ſet about this duty, when they hear him praying them to be reconciled unto him, let them remember, that peace and ſalvation is offered to the people in univerſal terms, to all without exception; "If any man will," he ſhall be welcome; If any thirſt, although after that which will never profit, yet they ſhall be welcome here, on the condition foreſaid; All are "commanded to believe." "This is his commandment, that we ſhould believe on the name of his Son Jeſus Chriſt." The promiſes are to all who are externally called by the goſpel. God excludes none, if they do not exclude themſelves; "The promiſe is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God ſhall call." So that if any have a mind for the thing, they may come forward, "he will in no wiſe caſt them out," being "able to ſave to the uttermoſt them who come to God through him;" and theſe who have long delayed to take this matter to heart had now the more need to look to it, leſt what belongs

to their peace be hid from their eyes. But all theſe words will not take effect with people, until "God pour out his ſpirit from on high," to cauſe men to approach unto God in Chriſt; yet we muſt ſtill preſs men's duty upon them, and obteſt and charge them by the appearing of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and their reckoning to him in that day, that they give the Lord no reſt, until he ſend out that "ſpirit, which he will give to them who aſk it," and cauſe them to know what belongs unto their peace, and bring them up to their duty.

SECTION II.

What is previouſly required of thoſe that would believe on Chriſt Jeſus.

WE come now to ſpeak of the *Third* thing, *viz.* what is previouſly required of thoſe who are to perform this duty. Men muſt not raſhly, inconſiderately, and ignorantly ruſh in upon this matter, ſaying, they pleaſe that device of ſaving ſinners by Chriſt, and will acquieſce and reſt on him for ſafety. Often men do deceive themſelves here, and do imagine that they have done the thing. We ſhall therefore hold out ſome things prerequired in a perſon who is to cloſe with Chriſt Jeſus; which although we offer not as poſitive qualifications, fitting a man for Chriſt that way, "Come—without money, and without price;" yet they are ſuch things, as without them a man cannot knowingly and cordially perform the duty of believing on Chriſt Jeſus.

Beſide the common principles which are to be ſuppoſed in thoſe who live under goſpel ordinances: as the knowledge that men have immortal ſouls; that ſoul and body will be united again at the laſt day; that there is a heaven and hell, one of which will be the everlaſting lot of all men; that the Old and New Teſtament is the true word of God, and the rule of faith and manners; that every man is by nature void of the grace of God, and

is an enemy unto God, and an heir of condemnation; that reconciliation is only by the Mediator Chriſt Jeſus; that faith unites unto him, and is the condition of the new covenant; that holineſs is the fruit of true faith, and is to be ſtudied, as that without which no man ſhall ſee God; I ſay beſide theſe things, the knowledge of which is neceſſary, it is required of him who would believe on Chriſt Jeſus, *firſt*, That he take to heart his natural condition: and here he muſt know ſome things, and alſo be very ſerious about them; I ſay, he muſt know ſome things; as,

1*ſt*. That as he was born a rebel and outlaw unto God, ſo he hath by many actual tranſgreſſions diſobliged God, and ratified the forfeiture of his favor: yea, a man ſhould know many particular inſtances of his rebellion on all hands; as that he is a liar, Sabbath-breaker, blaſphemer, or the like; as Paul ſpeaketh very particularly of himſelf afterwards. 2*dly*, The man muſt know that the wrath of God denounced in ſcripture is ſtanding in force againſt thoſe very ſins whereof he is guilty, and ſo, conſequently, he is the party undoubtedly againſt whom God who cannot lie, hath denounced war. A man muſt know, that when the ſcripture ſaith, "Curſed is he that offereth a corrupt thing unto God," it ſpeaketh againſt him for his ſuperficial ſervice performed unto God with the outward man, when his heart was far off. When the word ſaith, "The Lord will not hold him guiltleſs that taketh his name in vain," the man muſt know it ſpeaketh againſt himſelf, who hath often careleſsly profaned that dreadful "Name, before which all knees ſhould bow," and "which his enemies do take in vain." When the word ſaith, "Curſed is he that doth the work of the Lord negligently," the man muſt know that it ſpeaks againſt himſelf, who hath irreverently, with much wandering of heart, and drowſineſs, heard the word preached; and without ſenſe, faith, or underſtanding, hath often prayed before him. When the word ſaith, "Woe be unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, and

putteth his bottle to him to make him drunk alſo that he may look on his nakedneſs," the man muſt know that it is ſpoken againſt himſelf, who hath gloried in making his neighbour drunk, and that dreadful wrath is determined by the Lord againſt him, according to that ſcripture. When the word ſaith, "God will judge unclean perſons," and will cloſe them out of the "New-Jeruſalem, and they ſhall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimſtone," the man muſt know that the Scripture ſpeaketh theſe very words againſt him, he being an unclean perſon; ſo that he is the perſon againſt whom the curſes of the law do directly ſtrike.

3*dly*. A man muſt know that he hath nothing of his own to procure his peace, and to ſet him free of the hazard under which he lieth: becauſe "all his righteouſneſs is as an unclean thing. His prayers, his other ſervice done to God, his alms-deeds, &c. are not paſs-gilt before God, ſince they came not from a right principle in his heart, and were not performed in a right way, nor upon a right account, nor for a right end: his "ſacrifices have been an abomination unto God."

4*thly*. He muſt know, that as he is void of all the ſaving graces of the ſpirit, as the true love of God, the true fear of his name, godly ſorrow for ſin, &c. ſo particularly, that he wants faith in Chriſt, who taketh burden for all them who believe on him. Until a man know this, he will ſtill leave all his debt and burden, without care or regard any where elſe, before he bring it to the common cautioner.

Now, not only muſt a man know theſe things, as I ſaid before, but muſt alſo very ſeriouſly take them to heart; that is to ſay, he muſt be affected with theſe things, and be in ſad earneſt about them, as he uſeth to be in other caſes, wherein he uſeth to be moſt ſerious; yea, he ſhould be more in earneſt here, than in other caſes, becauſe it is of greater concernment unto him. This ſeriouſneſs produceth,

(1.) A taking of ſalvation to heart more than any thing

elſe. Shall men be obliged to ſeek firſt the kingdom of God?" is there but "one thing neceſſary?" Shall Paul count all things loſs and "dung" for this matter? Is "a man a loſer gaining all the world, if he loſe his ſoul?" Shall this be the only ground of joy, "that men's names are written in the book of life?" And ſhall not men, who would be reckoned ſerious, take their ſoul and ſalvation more to heart than any thing elſe? Surely it cannot fail. Let none deceive themſelves. If the hazard of their ſoul, and the ſalvation thereof, and how to be in favour with God hath not gone nearer to their heart than any thing in the world beſide, it cannot be preſumed, upon juſt grounds, that they ever knew ſin or God, or the everlaſtingneſs of his wrath, aright.

(2.) This ſerioufneſs breaketh the man's heart, and fainteth the ſtoutneſs of it, and leadeth it out to ſorrow, as one doth for a firſt-born, *Zach.* xii. 10. I grant their ſorrow will better ſuit that ſcripture afterwards, when they apprehend Chriſt pierced by their ſins.

(3.) It leadeth the man to a ſelf-loathing. A man taking up himſelf ſo cannot but loathe himſelf for his abominations, whereby he hath deſtroyed himſelf. There is ſomewhat of that ſpirit of revenge, which is mentioned as a fruit of true-repentance, "This ſelf-ſame thing that ye ſorrowed after a godly ſort, what carefulneſs it wrought in you—yea, what revenge!"

(4.) This ſerioufneſs doth make the man peremptory to find relief; ſince it is not in himſelf, he dare not put off and delay his buſineſs as before: and this is indeed required, that he find himſelf ſo purſued and put to it, that he flee for refuge ſomewhere. I grant ſome have a higher and ſome a leſſer degree of this ſerioufneſs, as we ſhewed in the former part of this treatiſe: but if we ſpeak of the Lord's ordinary way of working with thoſe who are come to age, we ſay, they muſt very ſeriouſly take their ſoul's eſtate to heart, deſpairing of help in themſelves, "ſince the whole need not a phyſician, but thoſe who are ſick. As for the meaſure, we plead only that which probably doth ſuppoſe that a man will

be induced thereby to tranſact cordially with Chriſt, on any terms he doth offer himſelf to be cloſed with.

The *ſecond* thing pre-required of him who would believe on Chriſt Jeſus is, he muſt know and take to heart the way of eſcape from God's wrath: the Spirit muſt convince him of that righteouſneſs. Here a man muſt underſtand ſomewhat diſtinctly, that God hath deviſed a way to ſave poor loſt man by Jeſus Chriſt, whoſe perfect righteouſneſs hath ſatisfied offended juſtice, and procured pardon and everlaſting favour to all thoſe whom he perſuadeth, by this goſpel to accept of God's offer; "Be it known unto you therefore—that through this man is preached unto you forgiveneſs of ſins; and by him all that believe are juſtified from all things." "As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the ſons of God, even to them that believe on his name." So that no perſon is excluded, of whatſoever rank or condition, whatſoever hath been his former way, unleſs he be guilty of the ſin againſt the Holy-Ghoſt, which is a malicious hatred and rejection of the remedy appointed for ſinners, as we ſhall hear: for, all manner of ſin, is forgiven unto thoſe who accept of the offer in God's way, "He is able to ſave to the uttermoſt thoſe that come unto God through him."

The *third* thing pre-required is, A man muſt know, that as God hath not excluded him from the relief appointed, ſo he is willing to be reconciled unto men thro' Chriſt Jeſus, and ſo to impropriate that ſalvation to themſelves. He not only invites all to come, and welcometh all that come, as we find in the goſpel, and commendeth thoſe who come as the centurion, *Matth.* viii. 10. and the woman of Canaan, *Matth.* xv. 28. and chideth for not coming and cloſing with him, "And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life;" and condemneth for not cloſing ſo with him, "He that believeth not is condemned already;" but alſo he commandeth all to believe on Chriſt; "This is his commandment, that we ſhould believe on the name of his Son Jeſus

Chriſt." So as a man is not to queſtion the Lord's willingneſs to receive men who go to Chriſt honeſtly, for God hath abundantly cleared that in ſcripture. Unleſs that a man know ſo much, he will ſcarcely dare to lay his heart open for that noble device of ſaving ſinners or adventure his own weight and ſtreſs upon Chriſt Jeſus.

The *fourth* thing pre-required is, The man who would cloſe with Chriſt Jeſus muſt reſolve to break all covenants with hell and death; Whatſoever known evil men are engaged into they muſt reſolve to forego it; "for there is no concord between Chriſt and Belial:" The Lord requireth that they who would expect "him to be for them, ſhould not be for another;" This is far from evangelic repentance, which I grant doth not precede a man's cloſing with Chriſt by faith: there is little here beyond a miſregard of theſe things unto which a man was formerly devoted, and a ſlighting what he was mad upon, becauſe he ſeeth himſelf deſtroyed thereby, and relief now offered; whereupon his heart beginneth to be more intent than formerly it was. After this, when Chriſt is looked upon alone, his worth and beauty doth appear, ſo as among all the gods there is none like unto him, and he looketh out as a ſufficient covering of the eyes to all who get him: upon which the heart loveth God's device in the new covenant, and loveth to lay its weight upon Chriſt rather than any other way, bending towards him; and ſo the man becometh a believer.

Now, I will not ſay that all theſe things, whereof we have ſpoken, are formally, orderly, and diſtinctly, found in every perſon before he cloſe with God in Chriſt; for the way of the heart with Chriſt may be added to "the four wonderful things," It is hard to trace the heart in its tranſlation from darkneſs to light; yet we hold out the moſt ordinary and likely way to him who doth aſk the way; debarring thereby ignorant and ſenſeleſs perſons from meddling, and diſcharging them to pretend to any intereſt in him whilſt they remain ſuch.

SECTION III.

The Properties and native Conſequences of true Believing.

THE *Fourth* thing we propoſed to ſpeak to is, The properties of this duty, when rightly gone about. I ſhall only hint a few.

1*ſt.* Believing on Chriſt muſt be *perſonal;* a man himſelf and in his own proper perſon muſt cloſe with Chriſt Jeſus; "The juſt ſhall live by his faith," This faith, that it will not ſuffice for a man's ſafety and relief, that he is in covenant with God as a born member of the viſible church, by virtue of the parents' ſubjection to God's ordinances: neither will it ſuffice that the perſon had the initiating ſeal of baptiſm added, and that he then virtually engaged to ſeek ſalvation by Chriſt's blood, as all infants do: neither doth it ſuffice that men are come of believing parents; their faith will not inſtate their children into a right to the ſpiritual bleſſings of the covenant: neither will it ſuffice that parents did in ſome reſpect engage for their children, and give them away unto God; all theſe things do not avail. The children of the kingdom and of godly predeceſſors are caſt out; unleſs a man, in his own perſon, put our faith in Chriſt Jeſus, and with his own heart pleaſe and acquieſce in that device of ſaving ſinners, he cannot be ſaved. I grant, this faith is given unto him by Chriſt; but certain it is that it muſt be perſonal.

2*dly.* This duty muſt be *cordial* and *hearty*; "With the heart man believeth unto righteouſneſs:" A man muſt be ſincere, and without guile, in cloſing with Chriſt, judging him the only covering of the eyes, not hankering after another way. The matter muſt not ſwim only in the head or underſtanding, but it muſt be in the heart; the man not only muſt be perſuaded that Chriſt is the way, but affectionately perſuaded of it, loving and liking the thing, having complacency in it; ſo that "it is all a man's deſire," as David ſpeaketh of the covenant, If a man be

cordial and affectionate in any thing, ſurely he muſt be ſo here in this "one thing that is neceſſary." It muſt not be ſimply a fancy in the head, it muſt be a heart-buſineſs, a ſoul-buſineſs; yea, not a buſineſs in the outer court of affections, but in the flower of affections, and in the innermoſt cabinet of the ſoul, where Chriſt is formed. Shall a man be cordial in any thing, and not in this, which doth compriſe all his chief intereſts and his everlaſting ſtate within it? Shall "the Lord be ſaid to rejoice over a man as a bridegroom rejoiceth over his bride?" and to "reſt in his love with joy?" and ſhall not the heart of man go out and meet him here? The heart or nothing; love or nothing; marriage-love, which goeth from heart to heart; love of eſpouſals, or nothing;—. "My ſon, give me thine heart." "Though I beſtow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." I will not ſay that there is in all, as ſoon as they believe, a prevailing ſenſible love, which maketh ſick; but there muſt be in believing a rational and kindly love, ſo well grounded, and deeply engaging, that "many waters cannot quench it. It is ſtrong as death, and jealouſy in it burneth as fire."

3*dly*. The third property or qualification of believing, as it goeth out after Chriſt it muſt be *rational*. Hereby I mean, that the man ſhould move towards God in Chriſt, in knowledge and underſtanding taking up God's device of ſaving ſinners by Chriſt as the ſcripture doth hold it out; not fancying a Chriſt to himſelf otherwiſe than the goſpel ſpeaketh of him, nor another way of relief by him than the word of God holdeth out. Therefore we find *knowledge* joined to the covenant between God and man as a requiſite; "And I will give them an heart to know me, that I am the Lord; and they ſhall be my people, and I will be their God." "And they ſhall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, ſaying, Know the Lord: for they ſhall all know me, from the leaſt of them unto the

greateſt of them, ſaith the Lord." I mean here alſo, that a man be in calmneſs of ſpirit, and, as it were, in his cold blood, in cloſing with Chriſt Jeſus; not in a fit of affection, which ſoon evaniſheth: "He that received the ſeed into ſtony places, the ſame is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it;" nor in a diſtemper through ſome outward diſtreſs, as the people were, "When he ſlew them, then they ſought him —and proved not ſtedfaſt in the covenant:" nor under a temptation of ſome outward temporary intereſt, as Simon Magus was when he believed, *Acts* viii. A man muſt act here rationally as being maſter of himſelf, in ſome meaſure able to judge of the good or evil of the thing as it ſtands before him.

4*thly*. The *fourth* is faith; as it goeth out rationally, ſo it goeth out *reſolutely*. The poor diſtreſſed people in the goſpel did moſt reſolutely caſt themſelves upon Chriſt. This reſoluteneſs of ſpirit is in order to all difficulties that ly in the way; violence is offered to theſe. The man whoſe heart is a ſhaping out for Chriſt Jeſus cannot ſay, "There is a lion in the ſtreet." If he cannot have acceſs by the door, he will break through the roof of the houſe, with that man, *Luke* v. 19. He often doth not regard that which the world calleth *diſcretion* or *prudence*, like Zacheus climbing up on a tree to ſee Chriſt, when faith was breeding in his boſom, *Luke* xix. This reſoluteneſs of ſpirit looketh towards what inconveniencies may follow, and waveth all theſe; at leaſt, reſolving over all theſe, like a "wiſe builder, who reckoneth the expenſe before-hand." This reſoluteneſs is alſo in order to all a man's idols, and ſuch weights as would eaſily beſet him if he did not bend after Chriſt over them all, like that blind man who did caſt his garments from him when Chriſt called him. This reſoluteneſs in the ſoul proceedeth from deſperate ſelf-neceſſity within the man, as it was with the Jailor, *Acts* xvi. 30, and from the ſovereign command of God, obliging the man to move towards Chriſt; "This is his command-

ment, that we ſhould believe on the name of his Son Jeſus Chriſt;" and from the good report gone abroad of God, that "he putteth none away that come unto him through Chriſt," but doth commend ſuch as do adventure over the greateſt difficulties, as the woman of Canaan, *Mat.* xv. 28. But, above all, this reſoluteneſs doth proceed from the arm of JEHOVAH, ſecretly and ſtrongly drawing the ſinner towards Chriſt; "No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath ſent me draw him."

I will not ſay, that every one, cloſing with Chriſt in the offers of the goſpel, hath all the foreſaid thoughts formally in his mind; yet, upon ſearch, it will be found, if he be put to it, or put in mind of theſe things, they are then aloft in the ſoul.

By what is ſaid, it doth manifeſtly appear, that many in the viſible church had need to do ſomewhat further for ſecuring of their ſoul, when they come to years of diſcretion, than is found to have been done by them before, in the covenant between God and the church, ſealed to them in baptiſm.

By what is ſaid alſo, there is a competent guard upon the free grace of God in the goſpel, held out through Chriſt Jeſus; ſo as ignorant, ſenſeleſs, profane men, cannot, with any ſhadow of reaſon, pretend to an intereſt in it. It is true, believing in Chriſt, and cloſing with him as a perfect Saviour, ſeemeth eaſy, and every godleſs man ſaith, that he believeth on him: but they deceive themſelves, ſince their ſoul hath never cordially, rationally, and reſolutely, gone out after Chriſt Jeſus, as we have ſaid. It may be ſome wicked men have been *enlightened*, *Heb.* vi. 4. and have found ſome diſorderly motion in their fear, Felix trembled, *Acts* xxiv. 25. or in their joy; "He that received the ſeed into ſtony places, the ſame is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it," and "Herod heard John gladly;" but not "having engaged their heart in approaching to God," have either ſitten down in that com-

mon work, as their ſanctuary, until the trial come. "When tribulation or perſecution ariſeth because of the word, by and by he is offended: or, "they return back with the dog to their vomit," from which they had in ſome meaſure "eſcaped by the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour," ; or they utterly fall away to the hatred and malicious deſpiſing and perſecuting of Chriſt and his intereſts; "from whence hardly can they be recovered." Which things ſhould provoke men to be ſerious in this great buſineſs.

We come now to ſpeak to the *Fifth* thing propoſed, and that is, What be the native conſequences of true believing. I ſhall reduce what I will ſpeak of them to theſe two, *viz.* Union with God, and communion. *Firſt*, then I ſay, when a ſinner cloſeth with Chriſt Jeſus as ſaid is, there is preſently an admirable *union*, a ſtrange oneneſs, between God and the man. As the huſband and wife, head and body, root and branches are not to be reckoned two but one; ſo Chriſt, or God in Chriſt, and the ſinner cloſing with him by faith, are one; "We are members of his body, of his fleſh, and of his bones," &c. "He that is ſo joined unto the Lord, is one ſpirit." "As the Father is in the Son, and Chriſt in the Father; ſo believers are one in the Father and the Son: they are one as the Father and the Son are one. The Father in Chriſt, and Chriſt in believers, that they may be made perfect in one." O what a ſtrange interweaving, and indiſſoluble knot there!

Becauſe of this union betwixt God and the believer, (1.) They can never hate one another. Herein the Lord will never have the believer. "No man ever hateth his own fleſh at any time, but cherisheth and nourisheth it," ſo God. Chriſt may be angry, ſo as to correct and chaſtiſe the man that is a believer; but he can no more hate him, than his own body and members. "All the Lord's paths are mercy and truth to him." "Loving kindneſs and tender mercies to him." O the never ſaid, the ſweet ſaid to him

hate God maliciouſly; "He that is born of God ſinnet not." For the Lord hath reſolved and ordained thin ſo, that his hand ſhall undoubtedly ſo be upon all believ ers for good, that they ſhall never get leave to hate him and be ſo plucked out of his hand.

(2.) Becauſe of this union there is a ſtrange ſympa thy and fellow feeling between God and the believe "The Lord is afflicted with the man's affliction." H doth tenderly, carefully, and ſeaſonably reſent it, as he were afflicted with it. "He who toucheth the belie er, toucheth the apple of the Lord's eye." "He touched with the feeling of their infirmities;" "and pr cious in his ſight is their blood." In a word what is don to them is done unto him; and what is not done unto the is not done unto him; "He that receiveth you, receive me." "In as much as ye have done it unto one of the lea of theſe my brethren, ye have done it unto me.—In much as ye did it not to one of the leaſt of theſe, ye d it not to me." On the other part, "the zeal of h houſe ſitteth in the heart of the believer; "The Lord reproach" lighteth on the believer. If it go well wi his affairs, that is the buſineſs of his people. So there a ſtrange ſympathy between God and believers, all b virtue of the union between them; becauſe of whic men ſhould hate every thing which would rival him their love or affections, and ſhould diſdain to be ſlav to the creatures, ſince theſe are the ſervants of their Lo and huſband, and their ſervants through him. What hateful thing for a queen to whore with the ſervants her prince and huſband? It is alſo a ſhame for a belie er to be "afraid of evil tidings," ſince the Lord, wi whom he is one, alone ruleth all things, "and do whatſoever pleaſeth him in heaven and earth." "A things are your's, and ye are Chriſt's and Chriſt is God's "Surely he ſhall not be moved forever, he ſhall not afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, truſting in t Lord, his heart is eſtabliſhed, he ſhall not be afraid

"Our God is in the heavens, he hath done whatsoever he pleased."

The other great consequences of believing, [illegible] mirable unperadventure [illegible] by virtue whereof, [illegible] The parties themselves do belong to each other. The Lord is the God of his people: he himself, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is their God, in all his glorious attributes; his justice as well as his mercy, his wisdom, power, holiness, &c. for he becometh the God of his people, as he often speaketh in the covenant. On the other part the believers are his people. In their very persons they are his, as the covenant doth speak they shall be his people; their head, their heart, their hand, &c. whatsoever they are, they are his.

2. By virtue of this communion they have a mutual interest in one another's whole goods and money, in as far as can be useful. All the Lord's word doth belong to the believer, threatenings as well as promises, for their good; all his ways, all his works of all sorts, special communications, death, devils, even all things, in so far as can be useful; "All things are your's, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are your's, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's." On the other side all which belongeth to the believer is the Lord's; heritage, children, life, soul, [illegible] is at his disposing; if any of the [illegible] the believer is to forego them, [illegible] munion, and declareth himself, [illegible] Christ; "If any man come to me, [illegible] ther—yea, [illegible]

3. By virtue of [illegible] home [illegible] The Lord [illegible] to the [illegible] him; [illegible] "What [illegible] duty [illegible]

the word and will of the Lord." On the other part, the believer may, in an humble way, be homely and familiar with God in Chriſt: he may "come with boldneſs to the throne of grace," and not uſe a number of compliments in his addreſſes unto God, for "he is no more a ſtranger unto God," ſo that he needs not ſpeak unto God as one who has acquaintance to make every hour, as many profeſſors do; and it maketh a huge inconſiſtency in their religion.

The believer alſo may lay open all his heart unto God; "I have poured out my ſoul before the Lord," and impart all his ſecrets unto him, and all his temptations, without fear of a miſtake. The believer alſo may inquire into what God doth, in ſo far as may concern his own duty, or in ſo far as may ward off miſtakes of the Lord's way, and reconcile it with his word; ſo *Job* xiii. 15. "Though he ſlay me, yet will I truſt in him; but I will maintain mine own ways before him." The believer is a friend in this reſpect, as "knowing what the Maſter doth." See *Gen.* xviii. 23, *&c. Jer.* xii. 1. *Iſa.* lxiii. 17.

The believer alſo may be homely with God, to go in daily with his failings, and ſeek repentance, pardon, and peace, through Chriſt's advocateſhip; "Him hath God exalted with his right hand, to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Iſrael, and forgiveneſs of ſins." "If any man ſin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jeſus Chriſt the righteous." O how often in one day may the believer plead pardon, if he intend not to mock God, or to turn grace into wantonneſs! The Lord hath commanded men to "forgive ſeventy times ſeven times in one day;" and hath hinted there in the parable "of a King who took account of his ſervants," how much more the Maſter will forgive, *Mat.* xviii. 22—28.

The believer alſo may be homely to intruſt God with all his outward concernments, for he doth care for theſe things; "If God ſo clothe the graſs of the field—ſhall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?—

Therefore take no thought, ſaying, What ſhall we eat? or, What ſhall we drink? or, Wherewithal ſhall we be clothed? For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all theſe things. Caſting all your care upon him, for he careth for you." Yea, the believer may humbly put God to it, to make him forth-coming for him in all caſes as beſeemeth, and to help him to ſuitable fruit in every ſeaſon, even grace in time of need." Yea, how great things may believers ſeek from him in Chriſt Jeſus, both for themſelves and others! "If we aſk any thing according to his will, he heartheth us. Whatſoever ye ſhall aſk in my name, that will I do. Aſk me things to come concerning my ſons; and concerning the work of my hands command ye me." It is the ſhame and great prejudice of his people that they do not improve that communion with God more than they do: Chriſt may juſtly upbraid them, "that they aſk nothing in his name."

By what is ſaid, it doth appear of how great conſequence this duty of believing is, by which a man cloſeth with Chriſt Jeſus, whom the Father hath ſealed, and given for a covenant to the people. It is ſo honorable for God, anſwering his very deſign, and ſerving his intereſt in the whole contrivement and manifeſtation of the goſpel; and it is ſo advantageous to men, that Satan and an evil heart of unbelief do mightily oppoſe it, by moving objections againſt it. I ſhall hint ſome moſt ordinary.

Chapter III.

Objections taken from a Man's Unworthineſs, and the Heinouſneſs of his Sin, anſwered.

Object. I AM ſo baſe, worthleſs, and weak of myſelf, that I think it were high preſumption for me to meddle with Chriſt Jeſus, or the ſalvation purchaſed at the rate of his blood.

Anſw. It is true, all the children of Adam are baſe and naughty before him, "who chargeth his angels with folly: All nations are leſs than nothing, and vanity before him." There is ſuch a diſproportion between God and men, that unleſs he himſelf had deviſed that covenant, and of his own free will had offered ſo to tranſact with men, it had been high treaſon for men or angels to have imagined that God ſhould have humbled himſelf, and become a ſervant, and have taken on our nature, and have united it by a perſonal union to the bleſſed Godhead; and that he ſhould have ſubjected himſelf to the ſhameful death of the croſs; and all this, that men, who were rebels, ſhould be reconciled unto God, and be made eternally happy, by being in his holy company for ever.

But I ſay, all that was his own device and free choice: yea, moreover, if God had not ſovereignly commanded men ſo to cloſe with him in and through Chriſt, *Iſa.* lv. 1, 2, 3. *Mat.* xi. 28. 1 *John* iii. 23. 2 *Cor.* v. 20. no man durſt have made uſe of that device of his. So then, although with Abigail I may ſay, "Let me be but a ſervant, to waſh the feet of the ſervants of my lord," yet, ſince he hath in his holy wiſdom deviſed that way, and knoweth how to be richly glorified in it, "The eyes of your underſtanding being enlightened, that ye may know—what is the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the ſaints. All mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them;" and he hath commanded

me, as I ſhall be anſwerable in the great day, to cloſe with him in Chriſt, as ſaid is, I dare not diſobey, nor inquire into the reaſons of his contrivements and commands, but muſt adventure on the buſineſs, as I would not be found to "fruſtrate the grace of God," and in a manner diſappoint the goſpel, and falſify the "record which God hath borne of his Son, that there is life enough in him for men," and ſo "make God a liar," and add that rebellion to all my former tranſgreſſions.

Object. I am a perſon ſingularly ſinful, beyond any I know; therefore I dare not preſume to go near unto Chriſt Jeſus, or look after that ſalvation which is through his righteouſneſs.

Anſw. Is your ſin beyond the drunkenneſs and inceſt of Lot; adultery covered with murder in David; idolatry and horrid apoſtacy in Solomon; idolatry, murder, and witchcraft in Manaſſeh; anger againſt God and his way in Jonah; forſwearing of Chriſt in Peter, after he was forewarned, and had vowed the contrary; bloody perſecution in Paul, making the ſaints to blaſpheme? *&c.* (but woe to him who is emboldened to ſin by theſe inſtances recorded in ſcripture, and adduced here to the commendation of the free and rich grace of God, and to encourage poor penitent ſinners to flee unto Chriſt); I ſay, are your ſins beyond theſe? yet all theſe obtained pardon through Chriſt, as the ſcripture doth ſhew.

Know therefore, that all ſins do ly alike level before the free grace of God, "who loveth freely," and looketh not to leſs or more ſin. If the perſon have a heart to "come unto him through Chriſt, then he is able to ſave to the uttermoſt:" Yea, it is more provoking before God not to cloſe with Chriſt when the offer cometh to a man than all the reſt of his tranſgreſſions are; for "he that believeth not hath made God a liar, in that record he hath borne of life in the Son: And he who doth not believe, ſhall be condemned for not believing on the Son of God;" That ſhall be the main thing in his ditty; ſo that much ſin cannot excuſe a man, if he ſcar at

Chriſt, and ſhift his offer; ſince God hath openly declared, that "this is a faithful ſaying, and worthy of all acceptation, Chriſt came to ſave ſinners, whereof I am chief." Even he who is *chief* of ſinners in his own apprehenſion is bound to believe and "accept this ſaying."

Object. My ſins have ſome aggravating circumſtances beyond the ſame ſins in other perſons, which doth much terrify me.

Anſ. What can the aggravations of thy ſins be, which are not parallel in the forecited examples? Is thy ſin againſt great light? ſo behoved many of theſe we ſpake of before. Was it againſt ſingular mercies and deliverances? ſo was that of Lot's and Noah's drunkenneſs. Was thy ſin done with much deliberation? ſo was David's, whilſt he wrote the letter againſt Uriah. Was it againſt or after any ſingular manifeſtation of God? ſo was Solomon's. Was it by a ſmall and deſpicable temptation? ſo was that of Jonah and of Peter; if we conſider the heinouſneſs of their tranſgreſſion. Haſt thou reiterated the ſin, and committed it over again? ſo did Lot, ſo did Peter, ſo did Jehoſhaphat in joining with Ahab and Jehoram, 1 *Kings* xxii. 2 *Kings* iii. Are there many groſs ſins concurring together in thee? ſo were there in Manaſſeh. Haſt thou ſtood long out in rebellion? (that, as the former, is thy ſhame: but) ſo did the "thief on the croſs;" he ſtood it out to the laſt gaſp, *Luke* xxiii. 42, 43. If yet "thou haſt an ear to hear," thou art commanded to "hear." Although thou haſt long "ſpent thy money for that which is not bread," thou haſt the greater need now to make haſte, and to flee for refuge; and if thou do ſo, he ſhall welcome thee, and "in no wiſe caſt thee out," eſpecially, ſince he hath uſed no preſcription of time in ſcripture. So that all thoſe aggravations of thy ſin will not excuſe thy ſhifting of the Lord's offer.

Object. In all theſe inſtances given you have not named the particulars whereof I am guilty; nor know I

any who ever obtained mercy before God being guilty of ſuch things as are in me.

Anſw. It is hard to condeſcend upon every particular tranſgreſſion which may vex the conſcience; yea, leſſer ſins than ſome of thoſe I have mentioned may hugely diſquiet, if the Lord blow the fire. But for thy ſatisfaction, I ſhall condeſcend upon ſome truths of Scripture, which do reach ſins and caſes more univerſally than any man can do particularly. See *Exod.* xxxiv. 7. "God pardoneth iniquity, tranſgreſſion and ſin;" that is, all manner of ſin. "If a man turn from all his wickedneſs, it ſhall no more be remembered, or prove his ruin." "Him that cometh, he will in no wiſe caſt out;" that is, whatſoever be his ſins, or the aggravations of them. "Whoſoever believeth ſhall have everlaſting life:" that is, without exception of any ſin, or any caſe." "He is able to ſave to the uttermoſt thoſe who come to God through him:" no man can ſufficiently declare what is God's *uttermoſt*. "All manner of ſin and blaſphemy ſhall be forgiven unto men; that is, there is no ſort of ſin, whereof one inſtance ſhall not be forgiven in one perſon or other, "except the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt." Theſe and the like Scriptures do carry all ſorts of ſin before them: ſo that let thy ſins be what they will, or can be, they may be ſunk in one of theſe truths: ſo as thy ſin can be no excuſe to thee for ſhifting the offer of peace and ſalvation through Chriſt ſince "any man who will," is allowed to "come and take."

We will not multiply words: the great God of heaven and earth hath ſovereignly commanded all who ſee their need of relief to betake themſelves unto Chriſt Jeſus, and to cloſe cordially with God's device of ſaving ſinners by him, laying aſide all objections and excuſes, as they ſhall be anſwerable unto him in the day he ſhall judge the quick and the dead, and ſhall drive away out of his preſence all thoſe who would dare to lay, their ſins and condition were ſuch as that they could not adventure

upon Chriſt's perfect righteouſneſs for their relief, notwithſtanding of the Lord's own command often interpoſed, and in a manner his credit engaged.

Chapter IV.

Of the Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt.

Object. I SUSPECT I am guilty of the "ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt," and ſo am incapable of pardon; and therefore I need not think of believing on Chriſt Jeſus for ſaving of my ſoul.

Anſw. Although none ſhould charge this ſin on themſelves, or on others, unleſs they can prove and inſtruct the charge according to Chriſt's example, *Mat.* xii. 25, 26, 32, yet, for ſatisfying of the doubt, I ſhall, *1ſt*, ſhew what is not the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, properly ſo called, becauſe there be ſome groſs ſins which people do unwarrantably judge to be this unpardonable ſin. *2dly*, I ſhall ſhew what is the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt. *3dly*, I ſhall draw ſome concluſions in anſwer directly to the objection.

As for the *firſt*, There be many groſs ſins, which although, as all other ſins, they be ſins againſt the Holy Ghoſt, who is God equal and one with the Father and the Son, and are done againſt ſome of his operations and motions: yet are they not "the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt," which is the unpardonable ſin. As *1ſt*, Blaſpheming of God under bodily tortures is not that ſin; for ſome ſaints fell into this, *Acts* xxvi. 11. "And I puniſhed them oft in every ſynagogue, and compelled them to blaſpheme:" much leſs blaſpheming of God in a fit of diſtraction or frenzy; for a man is not a free rational agent at that time: and "he that ſpareth his people, as a father doth the ſon that ſerveth him," "and pitieth them that fear him, as a father pitieth his children," ſo doth he ſpare and pity in theſe rovings; for

ſo would our fathers according to the fleſh do, if we blaſphemed them in a fit of diſtraction. Much leſs are horrid blaſphemies againſt God darted in upon the ſoul, and not allowed there, this unpardonable ſin; for ſuch things were offered to Chriſt, *Mat.* iv. and are often caſt in upon the ſaints.

2*dly*, The hating of good in others, whilſt I am not convinced that it is good, but in my light do judge it to be evil; yea, the ſpeaking againſt it, yea, the perſecuting of it in that caſe, is not the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt; for all theſe will be found in Paul before he was converted; and he obtained mercy, becauſe he did theſe things ignorantly.

3*dly*, Heart-riſing at the thriving of others in the work and way of God whilſt I love it in myſelf; yea, the riſing of heart againſt Providence, which often expreſſeth itſelf againſt the creatures neareſt our hand: yea, this riſing of heart entertained and maintained, (although they be horrid things leading towards that unpardonable ſin, yet) are not that ſin; for theſe may be in the ſaints, proceeding from ſelf-love, which cannot endure to be darkened by another, and proceeding from ſome croſs in their idol under a fit of temptation: the moſt part of all this was in Jonah, *chap.* iv.

4*thly*, Not only are not decays in what once was in the man, and falling into groſs ſins againſt light after the receiving of the truth, this unpardonable ſin; for then many of the ſaints in ſcripture were undone: but further apoſtacy from much of the truth is not that ſin; for that was in Solomon, and in the church of Corinth and Galatia: yea, denying, yea, forſwearing of the moſt fundamental truth under a great temptation is not this ſin; for then Peter had been undone.

5*thly*, As reſiſting, quenching, grieving, and vexing of the Spirit of God by many ſinful ways, are not this unpardonable ſin; for they are charged with theſe who are called to repentance in Scripture, and not ſhut out as guilty of this ſin; ſo neither reiterating ſin againſt

the Holy Ghoſt, although it leadeth towards it; for ſuch was Peter's ſin in denying Chriſt; ſo was Jehoſhaphat's ſin in joining with Ahab and Jehoram.

6thly, Purpoſes and eſſays of ſelf-murder, and even purpoſes of murdering godly men, the party being under a ſad fit of temptation; yea, actual ſelf-murder, (although probably it often joineth in the iſſue with this unpardonable ſin, which ought to make every ſoul look upon the very temptation to it with horror and abhorrence, yet) is not the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt. The Jailor intended to kill himſelf upon a worſe account than many poor people do, in the ſight and ſenſe of God's wrath, and of their own ſin and corruption; yet that Jailor obtained pardon, *Acts* xvi. 27, 34; and Paul, before his effectual calling, was acceſſary unto the murder of many ſaints, and intended to kill more as himſelf granteth, *Acts* xxvi. 9, 10, 11, 12.

Although all theſe are dreadful ſins, each of them deſerving wrath everlaſting, and not being repented of, bring endleſs vengeance; eſpecially the laſt cuts off hope of relief, for ought can be expected in an ordinary way; yet none of theſe is the unpardonable ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt: and ſo under any of theſe there is hope to him that hath an ear to hear the joyful ſound of the covenant. All manner of ſuch ſin and blaſphemy may be forgiven, as is clear in the Scripture, where theſe things are mentioned.

As for the *ſecond* thing. Let us ſee what the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt is. It is not a ſimple act of tranſgreſſion, but a complex of many miſchievous things, involving ſoul and body ordinarily in guilt. We thus deſcribe it: "It is a rejecting and oppoſing of the chief goſpel-truth, and way of ſalvation, made out ſingularly to a man by the ſpirit of God, in the truth and good thereof; and that avowedly, freely, wilfully, maliciouſly, and deſpitefully, breeding hopeleſs fear." There be three places of ſcripture which do ſpeak moſt of this ſin, and thence we will prove every part of this deſcription,

in ſo far as may be uſeful to our preſent purpoſe; by which it will appear that none who have a mind for Chriſt need ſtumble at what is ſpoken of this ſin in ſcripture. See *Mat.* xii. 23—32. *Heb.* vi. 4, 5, 6. and x. 25—29.

1*ſt.* Then, let us conſider the object about which this ſin, or ſinful acting of the man guilty thereof, is converſant, and that is the chief goſpel-truth and way of ſalvation; both which run to one thing. It is the way which God hath contrived for ſaving of ſinners by Jeſus Chriſt the promiſed Meſſiah and Saviour, by whoſe death and righteouſneſs men are to be ſaved, as he hath held forth in the ordinances, confirming the ſame by many mighty works in Scripture tending thereaway. This way of ſalvation is the object. The Phariſees oppoſe this, that Chriſt was the Meſſiah; "And all the people ſaid, Is not this the Son of David? "But when the Phariſees heard it, they ſaid, "This fellow doth not caſt out devils but by Belzebub the prince of the devils." The wrong is done againſt the Son of God; "It is impoſſible to renew them again unto repentance, ſeeing they crucify to themſelves the Son of God afreſh, and put him to an open ſhame:" and againſt the blood of the covenant, and the ſpirit graciouſly offering to apply theſe things; "Of how much ſorer puniſhment ſuppoſe ye, ſhall he be thought worthy, who had troden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was ſanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done deſpite unto the ſpirit of grace?"

2*dly.* In the deſcription, conſider the qualification of this object. It is ſingularly made out to the party by the ſpirit of God, both in the truth and good thereof. This ſaith, 1. That there muſt be knowledge of the truth and way of ſalvation. The Phariſees knew that Chriſt was the heir; "But when they ſaw the Son, they ſaid among themſelves, This is the heir, come, let us kill him." The party hath knowledge; "But if we ſin wilfully, after that we have received the knowledge of the

truth, there remaineth no more ſacrifice for ſins." 2. That knowledge of the thing muſt not ſwim only in the head, but there muſt be ſome half-heart perſuaſion of it. "Chriſt knew the Phariſees' thoughts," and ſo did judge them, and that the contrary of what they ſpake was made out upon their heart. There is a taſting which is beyond ſimple enlightening; "For it is impoſſible for thoſe who were once enlightened, and have taſted of the heavenly gift, and have taſted of the good word of God, and of the powers of the world to come." Yea, there is ſuch a perſuaſion ordinarily as leadeth to a deal of outward ſanctification; "Who hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith they were ſanctified, an unholy thing." 3. This perſuaſion muſt not only be of the verity of the thing, but of the good of it: the party "taſteth the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come," and he apprehendeth the thing as eligible. 4. This perſuaſion is not made out only by ſtrength of argument, but alſo by an enlightening work of God's ſpirit, ſhining on the truth, and making it conſpicuous; therefore is that ſin called, "The ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt;" The perſons are ſaid "to have been made partakers of the Holy Ghoſt," and "to deſpite unto the ſpirit of grace," who was in the neareſt ſtep of a gracious operation with them.

3*dly*. In this deſcription, conſider the acting of the party againſt the object ſo qualified. It is a reject[illegible] and oppoſing of it; which importeth, 1. That men h[illegible] once ſome way at leaſt been in hands with it, or had the offer of it, as is true of the Phariſees. 2. That they do reject, even with contempt, what they had of it, or in their offer. The Phariſees deny it, and ſpeak diſdainfully of Chriſt, "This fellow doth not caſt out devils but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils. They fall away, intending to put Chriſt to an open ſhame," The men ſet themſelves againſt it by the ſpirit of perſecution, as the Phariſees did ſtill. They rail againſt it; therefore it is called "blaſphemy againſt the Holy Ghoſt," They

would "crucify Chriſt again," if they could, *Heb.* vi. 6. They are *adverſaries*, *Heb.* x. 27.

4*thly*. Conſider the properties of this acting. 1. It is *avowed*, that is, not ſeeking to ſhelter or hide itſelf. The Phariſees ſpeak againſt Chriſt publicly, *Mat.* xii. 24.—They would have "Chriſt brought to an open ſhame," They forſake the ordinances which favor that way, *Heb.* x. 25. and deſpiſe the danger; for "looking for indignation, they trample that blood ſtill." 2. The party acteth *freely*. It is not from unadviſedneſs, nor from force or conſtraint, but an acting of free choice: nothing doth force the Phariſees to ſpeak againſt and perſecute Chriſt. They "crucify to themſelves," they re act the murder of their own free accord, and in their own boſom, none conſtraining them, *Heb.* vi. 6. They ſin of free choice, or, as the word may be rendered, *ſpontaneouſly*, *Heb.* x. 26. 3. It is acted *wilfully*. They are ſo reſolute, they will not be diſſuaded by any offer, or the moſt precious means, as is clear in the foreſaid ſcriptures. 4. It is done *maliciouſly*, ſo as it proceeds not ſo much, if at all, from a temptation to pleaſure, profit, or honor. It proceedeth not from fear, or force, or from any good end propoſed, but out of heart-malice againſt God and Chriſt, and the advancement of his glory and kingdom; ſo that it is of the very nature of Satan's ſin, who hath an irreconcileable hatred againſt God, and the remedy of ſin, becauſe his glory is thereby advanced. This is a ſpecial ingredient in this ſin. The Phariſees are found guilty of heart malice againſt Chriſt, ſince they ſpake ſo againſt him, and not againſt their own children caſting out devils; and this is the force of Chriſt's argument; "If I by Beelzebub caſt out devils, by whom do your children caſt them out?" They do their utmoſt "to crucify Chriſt again, and to bring him to an open ſhame." They are *adverſaries*, like the devil, *Heb.* x. 27. 5. It is done *deſperately*, the malice muſt bewray itſelf. The Phariſees muſt proclaim that Chriſt hath correſpondence with devils, *Mat.* xii. 24; he

muſt "be put to an open ſhame, and crucified again;" they muſt "tread under foot that blood, and do deſpite to the ſpirit:" ſo that the party had rather periſh a thouſand times than be in Chriſt's debt for ſalvation.

The *laſt* thing in the deſcription is, the ordinary attendant or conſequence of this ſin; it breedeth *deſperate and hopeleſs fear*. They fear him whom they hate with a ſlaviſh, hopeleſs fear, ſuch as devils have: "A certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation, which ſhall devour the adverſaries." They know that God will put out his power againſt them: they tremble in the remembrance of it; and if they could be above him, and deſtroy him, they covet it; and ſince they cannot reach that, they hate with the utmoſt of heart-malice, and do perſecute him, and all that is his, with deſpite.

As for the *third* thing propoſed, *viz.* the *concluſions* to be drawn from what is ſaid, whereby we will ſpeak directly to the objection. 1. As I hinted before, ſince the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt is ſo remarkable, and may be well known where it is, none ſhould charge themſelves with it unleſs they can prove and inſtruct the charge; for it is a great wrong done unto God to labor to perſuade my ſoul that he will never pardon me: it is the very way to make me deſperate, and to lead me unto the unpardonable ſin; therefore, unleſs thou canſt and dare ſay that thou doſt hate the way which God hath deviſed for ſaving of ſinners, and doſt reſolve to oppoſe the thriving of his kingdom, both with thyſelf and others, out of malice and deſpite againſt God, thou oughteſt not to ſuſpect thyſelf guilty of this ſin. 2. Whatſoever thou haſt done againſt God, if thou doſt rue it, and wiſh it were undone, thou cannot be guilty of this ſin; for in it heart-malice and deſpite againſt God do ſtill prevail. 3. If thou art content to be his debtor for pardon, and would be infinitely obliged unto him for it, then thou cannot in that caſe be guilty of the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt; for, as we ſhewed before, they who are guilty of it do ſo deſpite God, that they would not be his debtors

for ſalvation. 4. Whatſoever thou haſt done, if thou haſt a deſire after Jeſus Chriſt, and doſt look with a love heart after him, and cannot think of parting with his bleſſed company forever; or, if thou muſt part with him, yet doſt wiſh well to him, and all his, thou needeſt not ſuſpect thyſelf to be guilty of this unpardonable ſin; for there can be no ſuch hatred of him in thy bottom as is neceſſarily required to make up that ſin. 5. If thou would be above the reach of that ſin, and ſecure againſt it forever, then go work up thy heart to plead ſalvation by Chriſt Jeſus, and to cloſe with God in him, acquieſcing in him as the ſufficient ranſom and reſt, as we have been preſſing before, and yield to him to be ſaved in his way. Do this in good earneſt, and thou ſhalt be forever put out of the reach of that ugly thing where with Satan doth affright ſo many poor ſeekers of God.

Chapter V.

Objections, taken from want of Power to believe, and Unfruitfulneſs, anſwered.

Object. ALTHOUGH I be not excluded from the benefit of the new covenant, yet it is not in my power to believe upon Chriſt; for faith is the gift of God, and above the ſtrength of fleſh and blood.

Anſw. It is true that ſaving faith, whereby alone a man can heartily cloſe with God in Chriſt, is above our power, and is the gift of God, as we have ſeen in the premiſes; yet ſeeing the Word and the [illegible] duty upon all who hear the goſpel, to [illegible] cloſe with the offer of it, and [illegible] ceſſary to the [illegible] it be not in our power to perform it, and we are [illegible] perform it, [illegible]

firſt he made man perfectly able to do whatſoever he ſhould command. 2. The Lord commanding this thing, which is above our power, willeth us to be ſenſible of our inability to do the thing, and would have us putting it on him to work it in us. He hath promiſed to give the new heart, and he hath not excluded any from the benefit of that promiſe. 3. The Lord uſeth, by theſe commands and invitations, and men's meditation on the ſame, and their ſupplication about the thing, to convey power unto the ſoul to perform the duty.

Therefore, for anſwer to the objection, I do obteſt thee, in the Lord's name, to lay to heart theſe his commandments and promiſes, and meditate on them, and upon that bleſſed buſineſs of the new covenant, and pray unto God, as you can over them, "for he will be inquired to do theſe things," and lay thy cold heart to that device of God expreſſed in the Scriptures, and unto Chriſt Jeſus, who is given for a covenant to the people, and look to him for life and quickening. Go and eſſay to pleaſe that ſalvation in the way God doth offer it, and to cloſe with, and reſt on Chriſt for it, as if all were in thy power; yet looking to him for the thing, as knowing that it muſt come from him; and if thou do ſo, "he who meets theſe who remember him in his ways," will not be wanting on his part; and thou ſhalt not have ground to ſay, that thou movedſt towards the thing until thou couldſt do no more for want of ſtrength, and ſo left it at God's door: it ſhall not fail on his part, if thou have a mind for the buſineſs; yea, I may ſay, if by all thou haſt ever heard of that matter, thy heart loveth it, and deſireth to be in hands with it, thou haſt it already performed within thee; ſo that difficulty is paſt before thou waſt aware of it.

Object. Many who have cloſed with Chriſt Jeſus, as ſaid is, are ſtill complaining of their leanneſs and fruitleſsneſs, which maketh my heart lay the leſs weight on that duty of believing.

Anſw. If thou be convinced that it is a duty to believe on Chriſt, as ſaid is, you may not ſhift it under any pretence. As for theſe complaints of ſome who have looked after him, not admitting every one to be judge of his own fruit, I ſay,

(1.) Many, by their jealouſies of God's love, and by their miſbelief, after they have ſo cloſed with God, do obſtruct many precious communications, which otherwiſe would be let out to them; "And he did not many mighty works there becauſe of their unbelief."

(2.) It cannot be that any whoſe heart is gone out after Chriſt "have found him a wilderneſs." Surely they find ſomewhat in their ſpirit ſwaying them towards God in theſe two great things, *viz.* how to be found in him in that day; "Yea, doubtleſs, and I count all things but loſs for the excellency of the knowledge of Chriſt Jeſus my Lord; for whom I have ſuffered the loſs of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Chriſt, and be found in him, not having mine own righteouſneſs, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Chriſt, the righteouſneſs which is of God by faith:" and how to be forth coming to his praiſe in the land of the living." "Deal bountifully with thy ſervant, that I may live and keep thy word." "Wilt thou not deliver my feet from falling, that I may walk before God in the light of the living?" They find theſe two things aloft in the ſoul, and that is much. Moreover they ſhall, after ſearch, if they judge aright, find ever ſuch an emptineſs in the creatures, which abundance of the creature cannot fill up: all is vanity, only God can fill the empty room in their heart; and when he but breatheth a little there is no room for additional comfort from creatures. This faith, that God hath captivated the man, and hath fixed that ſaving principle in the underſtanding and heart, "Who is God but the Lord? worſhip him all ye gods." Yea, further, theſe whoſe hearts hath cloſed with God in Chriſt, as ſaid is, will not deny that there have been ſeaſonable preventings and

quickenings now and then when the ſoul was like to fail; "For thou preventeſt me with the bleſſings of thy goodneſs." "When I ſaid, My foot ſlippeth, thy mercy, O Lord, held me up. In the multitude of my thoughts within me, thy comforts delight my ſoul." Therefore let none ſay that there is no fruit following, and let none ſhift their duty upon the unjuſt and groundleſs complaints of others.

Chapter VI.

Of Covenanting with God.

Object. ALTHOUGH I judge it my duty to cloſe with God's device in the covenant, I am in the dark how to manage that duty; for ſometimes God doth offer to be our God without any mention of Chriſt, and ſometimes ſaith, that he will betrothe us unto him; and in other places of ſcripture we are called to come to Chriſt, and he is the bridegroom. Again, God ſometimes ſpeaketh of himſelf as a Father to men, ſometimes as a Huſband; Chriſt is ſometimes called the huſband, and ſometimes a brother; which relations ſeem inconſiſtent, and do much put me in the dark how to apprehend God, when my heart would agree with him, and cloſe with him.

Anſw. It may be very well ſaid, that men do come to God, or cloſe with him, and yet they come to Chriſt and cloſe with him. They may be ſaid to come under a marriage-relation unto God, and unto Chriſt alſo, who is huſband, father, brother, *&c.* to them; and there is no ſuch myſtery here as ſome do conceive.

For the better underſtanding of it, conſider theſe few things, *1ſt*, Although God made man perfect at the beginning, and put him in ſome capacity of tranſacting with him immediately; "God hath made man upright."

"And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayeſt freely eat," &c. yet man by his fall did put himſelf at a perfect diſtance with God, and in an utter incapacity to bargain or deal any more with him immediately.

2*dly*, The Lord did, after Adam's fall, make manifeſt the new covenant, in which he did ſignify he was content to tranſact with man again in and through a Mediator; and ſo did appoint men to come to him through Chriſt; "He is able to ſave them to the uttermoſt that come unto God by him;" and to look for acceptation only in him; "To the praiſe of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved;" ordaining men to hear Chriſt, he being the only party in whom God was well pleaſed; "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleaſed, hear ye him."

3*dly*, This matter is ſo clear, and ſuppoſed to be ſo plain in the ſcripture, and ſo manifeſt to all who are under the ordinances, that the Lord doth often ſpeak of tranſacting with himſelf, not making mention of the Mediator, becauſe it is ſuppoſed that every one in the church knoweth that now there is no dealing with God, except by and through Chriſt Jeſus the Mediator.

4*thly*, Conſider that Chriſt Jeſus, God-man, is not only a fit place for God and men to meet into, and a fit ſpokeſman to treat between the parties now at variance, "God was in Chriſt, reconciling the world to himſelf;" but we may ſay alſo, he is immediate bridegroom; and ſo our cloſing or tranſacting with God may be juſtly called, *the marriage of the King's Son*, and the elect may be called *the Lamb's wife*; Chriſt Jeſus being, as it were, the hand which God holdeth out unto men, and on which they lay hold when they deal with God. And ſo through and by Chriſt we cloſe with God, as our God, on whom our ſoul doth terminate laſtly and ultimately through Chriſt; "Who by him do believe in God that raiſed him from the dead and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God."

5thly, Conſider that the divers relations mentioned in ſcripture are ſet down, to ſignify the ſure and indiſſoluble union and communion between God and his people. Whatſoever nearneſs is between head and members, root and branches, king and ſubjects, ſhepherd and flock, father and children, brother and brother, huſband and wife, &c. all is here; "And they all ſhall be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee; that they alſo may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou haſt ſent me. And the glory which thou gaveſt me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one. I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou haſt ſent me, and haſt loved them, as thou haſt loved me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou haſt loved me may be in them, and I in them."—So that whatſoever be ſpoken in ſcripture, people may be clear, that God calleth them to be reconciled unto him through Chriſt, and doth offer himſelf to be their God and huſband in him alone: and men are to accept God to be their God in Chriſt, pleaſing that way of relief for poor man, and to give up themſelves unto God in Chriſt, in whom alone they can be accepted. And they who cloſe with Chriſt, they do cloſe with God in him, "who is in Chriſt, reconciling the world to himſelf." And we are not to dip further into the divers relations mentioned in ſcripture between God, or Chriſt, and men, than as they may point out union and communion, or nearneſs with God through Chriſt Jeſus, and our advantage thereby.

Theſe things being clear, we will not multiply words: but ſince to believe on Chriſt is the great duty required of all that hear this goſpel, we obteſt every one, in the Lord's name, to whom the report of this ſhall come, that without delay, they take to heart their loſt condition in themſelves; and that they lay to heart the relief which God hath provided by Jeſus Chriſt, whereof he hath

made a free offer unto all who will be content of the ſame, and to be ſaved that way; and that they lay to heart, that there is no other way of eſcape from the wrath that is to come, becauſe of which men would be glad, at the laſt day, to run into a lake of melted lead to be hid from the face of the Lamb, whom they do here deſpiſe; we ſay, we obteſt all, in the conſideration of theſe things, to work up their hearts to this buſineſs, and to lay themſelves open for God, and to receive him thro' Chriſt in the offers of the goſpel, acquieſcing in him as the only deſirable and ſatisfying good, that ſo they may ſecure themſelves. Go ſpeedily and ſearch for his offers of peace and ſalvation in the ſcripture, and work up your heart and ſoul to cloſe with them, and with Chriſt in them, and with God in Chriſt; and do it ſo, as you may have this to ſay, that you were ſerious, and in earneſt, and cordial here, as ever you were in any thing to your apprehenſion; and, for ought you know, Chriſt is the choice of your heart, at leaſt you neither know nor allow any thing to the contrary; whereupon your heart doth appeal unto God to ſearch and try if there be ought amiſs, to rectify it, and lead into the right way.

Now, this cleaving of the heart unto him, and caſting itſelf upon him, to be ſaved in his way, is believing; which doth indeed ſecure a man from the wrath that is to come, becauſe now he hath received Chriſt, and believeth on him, and ſo ſhall not enter into condemnation as ſaith the ſcripture.

Object. When I hear what it is to believe on Chriſt Jeſus, I think ſometimes I have faith; for I can ſay to my apprehenſion, I plead the invitation of [illegible] ſinners by Chriſt Jeſus, my heart [illegible] and doth [illegible] and I am glad to [illegible] but I often [illegible] am, for the moſt [illegible] do believe, or be [illegible]

Anſw. [illegible]

out after Chriſt in the goſpel, and have received him, to bring the ſame in queſtion again: therefore I ſhall adviſe one thing, as a notable help to fix the ſoul in the maintaining faith and an intereſt in God, and that is, that men not only cloſe heartily with God in Chriſt, as ſaid is, but alſo, that they "expreſsly, explicitly, by word of mouth, and vive voice, and formally cloſe with Chriſt Jeſus, and accept God's offer of ſalvation through him, and ſo make a covenant with God." And this, by God's bleſſing, may contribute not a little for eſtabliſhing them concerning their ſaving intereſt in God.

Before I ſpeak directly to this expreſs covenanting with God, I premiſe theſe few things. 1*ſt*, I do not here intend a covenanting with God eſſentially differing from the covenant between God and the viſible church, as the Lord doth hold it out in his revealed will; neither do I intend a covenant differing eſſentially from the tranſacting of the heart with God in Chriſt, formerly ſpoken unto: it is that ſame covenant; only it differeth by a ſingular circumſtance, *viz.* the *formal expreſſion* of the thing, which the heart did before practiſe.

2*dly*, I grant this expreſs covenanting and tranſacting with God is not abſolutely neceſſary for a man's ſalvation; for if any perſon cloſe heartily and ſincerely with God, offering himſelf in Chriſt in the goſpel, his ſoul and ſtate is thereby ſecured, according to the ſcripture, although he utter not words with his mouth; but this expreſs verbal covenanting with God is very expedient, for the better being of a man's ſtate, and his more comfortable maintaining of an intereſt in Chriſt Jeſus.

3*dly*, This expreſs covenanting with God by word of mouth is of no worth without ſincere heart cloſing with God in Chriſt joined with it: for without that it is but a profaning of the Lord's name, and a mocking of him to his face, ſo "to draw near unto him "with the lips, whilſt the heart is far away from him."

4*thly*, I grant, both cordial and verbal tranſacting with God will not make out a man's gracious eſtate un-

to him, ſo as to put and keep it above controverſy, without the joint witneſs of the ſpirit, by which we know what is freely given unto us of God; yet this explicit way of tranſacting with God, joined with that heart cloſing with him in Chriſt, contributes much for clearing up unto a man that there is a fixed bargain between God and him, and will do much to ward off him many groundleſs jealouſies and objections of an unſtable mind and heart, which uſeth affrontedly to deny this hour, what it did really act and perform the former hour. This explicit covenanting is as an inſtrument taken of what paſſed between God and the ſoul, and ſo hath its own advantage for ſtrengthening of faith.

As for this expreſs covenanting, we ſhall *1ſt*, ſhew, that it is a very warrantable practice. *2dly*, We ſhall ſhew ſhortly what is preparatorily required of thoſe who do ſo tranſact with God. *3dly*, How men ſhall go about that duty. *4thly*, What ſhould follow thereupon.

As to the *firſt*, I ſay, it is a warrantable practice, and an incumbent duty, expreſsly and by word to covenant with God; which appeareth thus;

1ſt, In many places of Scripture, if we look to what they may bear, according to their ſcope, and the analogy of faith, God hath commanded it, and left it on people as a duty; "One ſhall ſay I am the Lord's." "Surely ſhall one ſay, In the Lord have I righteouſneſs and ſtrength." "Wilt thou not from this time cry unto me, My Father thou art the guide of my youth." "They ſhall ſay, The Lord is my God." "Thou ſhalt call me Iſhi:" and in many places elſewhere. Now, ſince God hath ſo clearly left it on men in the letter of the word, they may be perſuaded that it is a practice warranted and allowed by him, and well pleaſing unto him.

2d, *Argument.* It is the approven practice of the ſaints in ſcripture thus expreſsly to covenant with God, and they have found much quiet in that duty afterwards. David did often expreſsly ſay unto God, that he was his God, his portion, and that himſelf was his ſervant.

Thomas will put his intereſt out of queſtion with it, "And Thomas anſwered and ſaid unto him, My Lord, and my God." Yea, I ſay, the ſaints are much quieted in remembrance of what hath paſſed that way between God and them; "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I deſire beſides thee. "I cried unto thee, O Lord, I ſaid thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living." We find it often ſo in the book of the *Canticles*. Now ſhall the chief worthies of God be ſo much in a duty, breeding ſo much quiet and ſatisfaction to them in many caſes, and ſhall we, under the New-Teſtament, unto whom acceſs is miniſtered abundantly, and who partake of the ſap of the olive; ſhall we, I ſay, ly behind in this approven piece of homelineſs with God? Since we ſtudy to imitate that cloud of witneſſes in other things, as faith, zeal patience, &c. let us alſo imitate them in this.

3*d Argument.* The thing about which we move here is a matter of the greateſt concernment in all the world: "It is the life of our ſoul." Oh! ſhall men ſtudy to be expreſs, explicit, plain and peremptory, in all their other great buſineſſes, becauſe they are ſuch; and ſhall they not much more be peremptory and expreſs in this, which doth moſt concern them? I wonder that many not only do not ſpeak it with their mouth, but that they do not ſwear and ſubſcribe it with their hand, and do not every thing for ſecuring of God to themſelves in Chriſt, and themſelves unto God, which the ſcripture doth warrant, *Iſa.* xliv. 5.

This alſo may have its own weight, as an argument to preſs this way of covenanting with God, that the buſineſs of an intereſt in Chriſt, and of real and honeſt tranſacting with him, is a thing which, in the experience of ſaints, is moſt frequently brought upon debate and in queſtion; therefore men had need, all the ways they can even by thought, word, and deed, to put it to a point.

This alſo may have place here for preſſing this as a duty, that God is ſo formal, expreſs, diſtinct, and legal, to ſay ſo, in all the buſineſs of man's ſalvation, *viz.*

Chriſt muſt be a near kinſman, to whom the right of redemption doth belong; he muſt be choſen, called, authoriſed, and ſent; covenants formally drawn between the Father and him, the Father accepting payment and ſatisfaction, giving formal diſcharges, all done clearly and expreſsly. Shall the Lord be ſo expreſs, plain, and peremptory in every part of the buſineſs, and ſhall our part of it reſt in a confuſed thought, and we be as dumb beaſts before him? If it were a marriage between man and wife, it would not be judged enough, although there were conſent in heart given by the woman, and known to the man, if ſhe did never expreſs ſo much by word, being in a capacity to do ſo. Now, this covenant between God and man is held out in Scripture as a "marriage between man and wife," *Hoſea* ii. 19, 20. 2 *Cor.* xi. 2. The whole *Song of Solomon* ſpeaketh it. The Lord uſeth ſimilitudes, to ſignify unto us what he intends; and ſurely this is a ſpecial requiſite in marriage that the wife give an expreſs and explicit conſent unto the buſineſs: the man ſaith, "So I take thee to be my lawful wife, and do oblige myſelf to be a dutiful huſband: The woman is obliged on the other part, to expreſs her conſent, and to ſay, "Even ſo I take thee to be my lawful huſband, and do promiſe duty and ſubjection." It is ſo here, the Lord ſaith, "I do betrothe thee unto me in faithfulneſs, and thou ſhalt call me Iſhi," that is, my huſband, I wilt be for thee as a head and huſband, if "thou wilt not be for another." The man ought to anſwer, and ſay, *Amen*, ſo be it, thou ſhalt be my God, my Head and Lord, and I ſhall and will be thine, and not for another; "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine." And ſo this making of the covenant with God is called, "A giving of the hand to him," as the word is: which doth hint a very expreſs, formal, explicit, and poſitive bargaining with God. So then, we conclude it to be an incumbent duty and a very approven practice, neceſſary for the quieting of a man's mind, and his more comfortable being in

covenant with God, and more fully anſwering God's condeſcendency and offer in that great and primary promiſe, "I will be your God, and ye ſhall be my people."

Not only may and ſhould people thus expreſsly cloſe with God in Chriſt for fixing their heart; but they may upon ſome occaſions, renew this verbal tranſaction with God, eſpecially when through temptations, they are made to queſtion if ever they have really and ſincerely cloſed covenant with God. As they are then to put out new acts of faith, embracing Chriſt as the deſirable portion and treaſure, and alſo upon other occaſions, ſo it were expedient, eſpecially if there remain any doubt concerning the thing, that by vive voice and expreſs word they determine that controverſy, and "ſay of the Lord, and to him, that he is their refuge and portion." We find the ſaints doing ſo; and we may imitate them. Eſpecially,

1*ſt*, In the time of great backſliding, people were wont to renew the covenant with God, and we ſhould do ſo alſo. Our heart ſhould go out after Chriſt in the promiſes of reconciliation with God: for he is our peace upon all occaſions, and our advocate; and we are bound to apprehend him ſo, when we tranſgreſs; "If any man ſin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jeſus Chriſt the righteous;" and to expreſs ſo much by word, as the ſaints did, in their formal renewing of the covenant.

2*dly*, When people are in hazard, and difficulties are preſent or foreſeen, then it were good that they ſhould ſend out their heart after him, and expreſs their adhering unto him, for ſecuring their own heart. We find Joſhua doing ſo, when he was to ſettle in the land of Canaan, in the midſt of ſnares, *Joſh.* xxiv. ſo David doth in his ſtraits, "In the ſhadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until theſe calamities be over-paſt."

3*dly*, When men apprehend God to be at a diſtance from them, and their ſoul to be under withering and decay, then it is ſafeſt heartily to cloſe with Chriſt, and em-

brace him by faith for the ſecuring of the ſoul; and it were good to put it out of queſtion by the expreſſion of the thing. This is the ready way to draw ſap from Chriſt the root, for recovering of the ſoul, and for eſtabliſhing the heart before him. The ſpouſe, in the *Song of Solomon*, doth ſo, thus aſſerting her intereſt in him when in ſuch a condition, profeſſing and avowing him to be her beloved, *Cant.* v.

4thly, At the celebration of the Lord's Supper men ſhould thus cordially cloſe with God in Chriſt, and ſpeak and expreſs ſo much: for that is a feaſt of love; and then and there we come under a ſolemn profeſſion of cloſing with God in Chriſt perſonally and openly, and do receive the ſeal of it. It is therefore beſeeming, at that time, to bring up both heart and tongue to ſecond and anſwer our profeſſion, apprehending God to be our God, and reſigning over ourſelves to be his, and at his diſpoſing.

We ſhall not confine the Lord's people to times and ſeaſons of this duty, the Lord may bind it upon them at his pleaſure; only there is hazard, that by too frequent expreſs covenanting with God, men turn too formal in it. Therefore it is not ſo fit that people ſhould ordinarily at full length renew that explicit tranſaction with God but rather to declare unto God that they adhere unto the covenant made with him, and that they do maintain and will never revoke nor recal the ſame; and withal, they may hint the ſum of it, in laying claim unto God in Chriſt as their own God; and this they may do often, even in all their addreſſes to God. And, probably, this is the thing deſigned by the ſaints in their ſo ordinary practice in Scripture, whilſt they aſſert their intereſt in God as their God and portion; and it is fit that men, in all their walk, hold their heart at the buſineſs, by heart-cleaving to God in Chriſt." "The life we live in the fleſh ſhould be by faith in the Son of God."

As to the *ſecond* thing, *viz.* what is preparatorily required of him who is expreſsly to tranſact with God here.

Beſide what we ſpake before, as previous to a man's cloſing with Chriſt Jeſus, we only add, 1*ſt*, That he who would explicitly bargain with God, muſt know, that to do ſo is warranted and allowed by God, as we ſhewed before. If this be wanting, a man cannot do it in faith, and ſo it will be ſin unto him; "Whatſoever is not of faith is ſin." 2*dly*, The man muſt labor to bring up his heart to the thing, that it do not belie the tongue; it will be a great mocking of God ſo to "draw near him with the lips, whilſt the heart is far off from him."

The *third* thing to be conſidered in this expreſs verbal covenanting with God, is the way how it is to be performed and managed. And beſide what was ſaid before in heart-cloſing with Chriſt, I add here,

1*ſt*, The man ſhould do it *confidently*; not only believing that he is about his duty when he doth it; but alſo, that God in Chriſt Jeſus will accept his poor imperfect way of doing this duty: he doth "accept a man according to what he hath, if there be a willing mind," a mite is accepted, ſince it is "all the poor woman's ſubſtance;" Yea, if it can be attained, the man ſhould believe that the iſſue and conſequence of this tranſacting ſhall prove comfortable, and all ſhall be well; and that God, who engageth for all in the covenant, (ſince he hath determined the man to this happy choice), will in ſome meaſure make him forthcoming, and will perfect what concerns him: "Faithful is he that calleth you, who alſo will do it;" If this confidence be wanting, the matter will be done with much fear and jealouſy, if not worſe; and will ſtill prove a diſquieting buſineſs to the man.

2*dly*. It ſhould be done *holily*. It is called "the holy covenant," "The holy things of David." Here it were fitting that what is done in this expreſs tranſacting with God ſhould not be done paſſingly, and on the by, but in ſome ſpecial addreſs unto God; the thing ſhould be ſpoken unto the Lord; "I cried unto thee, O Lord, I ſaid, Thou art my refuge and my portion." It is be-

ſeeming, in ſo great a buſineſs, that a piece of time were ſet apart for confeſſion and ſupplication before God; yea, alſo the perſon ſo tranſacting with God ſhould labour to have high apprehenſions of God's greatneſs and ſovereignty; "Thou art great, O Lord God; for there is none like thee, neither is there any God beſide thee," although he thus humble himſelf to behold things in heaven and earth; and theſe high and holy thoughts of him will and ſhould be attended with debaſing and humbling thoughts of ſelf, although admitted to this high dignity; "Then went King David in, and ſat before the Lord; and he ſaid, Who am I, O Lord God! and what is my houſe, that thou haſt brought me hitherto." It is no ſmall thing to be allied unto, and with the great God of heaven, and his Son Chriſt; as David ſpeaketh, when King Saul did offer his daughter unto him, 1 *Sam.* xviii. 22. Yea, further, there ſhould be ſpecial guarding and watching, that the heart keep ſpiritual in tranſacting with God. There is great reaſon for this holy way of performing the duty; for men are ready to neglect themſelves, and to ſhape the Lord according to their own fancy, and to turn carnal in the buſineſs, ſince is is a marriage tranſaction held out in all the ordinary expreſſions of love, as in the *Song of Solomon.*

The *fourth* thing we ſhall ſpeak a word unto is, What ſhould follow upon this expreſs verbal covenanting with God. I ſay, beſide that union and communion with God in Chriſt, following upon believing, if a man explicitly by word tranſact with God.

1*ſt.* He ſhould thenceforth be ſingularly careful to abide cloſe with God in all manner of converſation; for, if a man thenceforth do any thing unſuitable, he doth falſify his word before God, which will ſtick much in his conſcience, and prove a *ſnare.* If a man henceforth neglect God, and take on him to diſpoſe of himſelf, ſince he is not his own, and hath opened his mouth unto the Lord, "he makes inquiry after vows, and devoureth that which is holy."

2dly. He who ſo tranſacteth with God ſhould hold ſtedfaſt that determination and concluſion. It is a ſhame for a man, whoſe heart hath cloſed with God, and whoſe mouth hath ratified and confirmed it ſolemnly before him, to contradict himſelf again, and to admit any thing to the contrary; he ought boldly to maintain the thing againſt all deadly.

Then let me obteſt you, who deſire to be eſtabliſhed in the matter of your intereſt in God, that with all conveniency, you ſet apart a piece of time for prayer before God, and laboring to work up your heart to ſeriouſneſs, affection, and the faith of the duty, to make a covenant, and to tranſact with God by expreſs words, after this manner.

"O Lord, I am a loſt and broken creature by nature, and by innumerable actual tranſgreſſions, which I do confeſs particularly before thee this day: and although being born within the viſible church, I was from the womb in covenant with thee, and had the ſame ſealed to me in baptiſm; yet for a long time, I have lived without God in the world, ſenſeleſs and ignorant of my obligation, by virtue of that covenant. Thou haſt at length diſcovered unto me, and bound upon my heart, my miſerable ſtate in myſelf, and haſt made manifeſt unto my heart the ſatisfying relief thou haſt provided by Chriſt Jeſus, offering the ſame freely unto me, upon condition that I would accept of the ſame, and would cloſe with thee as my God in Chriſt, warranting and commanding me, upon my utmoſt peril, to accept of this offer, and to flee unto Chriſt Jeſus: yea, to my apprehenſion, now thou haſt ſovereignly determined my heart, and ſhaped it for Chriſt Jeſus, leading it out after him in the offers of the goſpel, cauſing me to approach unto the living God, to cloſe ſo with him, and to acquieſce in his offer, without any know guile. And that I may come up to that eſtabliſhment of ſpirit in this matter, which ſhould be to my comfort, and the praiſe of thy glorious grace; therefore, I am here this day to put that matter out of queſ-

tion by expreſs words before thee, according to thy will. And now I, unworthy as I am, to declare, that I believe that Chriſt Jeſus, who was ſlain at Jeruſalem, was the Son of God, and the Saviour of the world; I do believe that record, that there is life eternal for men in him and in him only; I do this day in my heart pleaſe and acquieſce in that device of ſaving ſinners by him, and do intruſt my ſoul unto him; I do accept of reconciliation with God through him, and do cloſe with thee as my God in him; I chuſe him in all that he is, and all that may follow him, and do reſign up myſelf, and what I am, or have, unto thee; deſiring to be divorced from every thing hateful unto thee, and that without exception, or reſervation, of any thing conſiſtent within my knowledge, or intended reverſion. Here I give the hand to thee, and do take all things about me witneſſes, that I, whatever I be, or have hitherto been, do accept of God's offer of peace through Chriſt: and do make a ſure covenant with thee this day, never to be reverſed, hoping that thou wilt make all things forth coming, both on thy part and mine, ſeriouſly begging, as I deſire to be ſaved, that my corruptions may be ſubdued, and my neck brought under thy ſweet yoke in all things, and my heart made cheerfully to acquieſce in whatſoever thou doſt unto me, or with me, in order to theſe ends. Now, glory be unto thee, O Father, who deviſed ſuch a ſalvation, and gave the Son to accompliſh it: glory be to Chriſt Jeſus, who, at ſo dear a rate, did purchaſe the outletting of that love from the Father's boſom, and through whom alone this acceſs is granted, and in whom I am reconciled unto God, and honourably united unto him, and am no more an enemy or ſtranger: glory to the Holy Ghoſt, who did alarm me when I was deſtroying myſelf, and who did not only convince me of my hazard, but did alſo open my eyes to behold the relief provided in Chriſt; yea, and did perſuade and determine my wild heart to fall in love with Chriſt, as the enriching treaſure; and this day doth teach me how to

covenant with God, and how to impropriate to myſelf all the ſure mercies of David, and bleſſings of Abraham and to ſecure to myſelf the favor and friendſhip of God forever. Now, with my ſoul, heart, head, and whole man, as I can, I do acquieſce in my choice this day, henceforth reſolving not to be my own, but thine; and that the care of whatſoever concerns me ſhall be on thee as my Head and Lord: proteſting humbly, that failings on my part (againſt which I reſolve, thou knoweſt) ſhall not make void this covenant; for ſo haſt thou ſaid which I intend not to abuſe, but ſo much the more to cleave cloſe unto thee, and I muſt have liberty to renew, ratify, and draw extracts of this tranſaction, as often as ſhall be needful. Now, I know thy conſent to this bargain ſtands recorded in ſcripture, ſo as I need no new ſignification of it; and I having accepted of thy offer upon thy own terms, will henceforth wait for what is good, and for thy ſalvation in end. As thou art faithful, pardon what is amiſs in my way of doing the thing, and accept me, in my ſweet Lord Jeſus, in whom I only deſire pardon. And in teſtimony hereof, I ſet to my ſeal that God is true, in declaring him a competent ſaviour."

Let people covenant with God in fewer or more words as the Lord ſhall diſpoſe them; for we intend no platform of words for any perſon, only it were fitting that men ſhould before the Lord acknowledge their loſt ſtate in themſelves, and the relief that is by Chriſt; and that they do declare that they accept of the ſame as it is offered in the goſpel, and do thankfully reſt ſatisfied with it, intruſting themſelves henceforth wholly unto God, to be ſaved in his way, for which they wait according to his faithfulneſs.

If men would heartily and ſincerely do this, it might through the Lord's bleſſing, help to eſtabliſh them againſt many fears and jealouſies; and they might date ſome good thing from this day and hour, which might prove comfortable unto them when they fall in the dark after-

wards, and even when many failings do ſtare them in the face, perhaps at the hour of death; "Theſe be the laſt words of David—Although my houſe be not ſo with God; yet he hath made with me an everlaſting covenant, ordered in all things and ſure; for this is all my ſalvation, and all my deſire." It is much if a man can appeal unto God, and ſay thou knoweſt there was a day and an hour when in ſuch a place I did accept of peace through Chriſt, and did deliver up my heart to thee to write on it thy whole law without exception; heaven and earth are witneſſes of it. "Remember the word unto thy ſervant, upon which thou haſt cauſed me to hope."

Object. I dare not adventure to ſpeak ſuch words unto God, becauſe I find not my heart coming up full length in affection and ſerioufneſs; ſo I ſhould but lie unto God, in tranſacting ſo with him.

Anſw. It is to be regretted that men's heart doth not, with much force of deſire and affection, embrace and welcome that bleſſed offer and portion. Yet, for anſwer to the objection, remember, (1.) That in thoſe to whom the Lord giveth the new heart, forming Chriſt in them, the whole heart is not renewed; there is "fleſh and ſpirit luſting againſt each other, the one contrary unto the other, ſo as a man can neither do the good or evil he would do" with full force. It is well if there be a good part of the heart going out after Chriſt, deſiring to cloſe with him on his own terms.

(2.) That there is often a rational love in the heart unto Chriſt Jeſus, expreſſing itſelf by a reſpect to his commandments: "This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous." When there is not a ſenſible prevailing love which maketh "the ſoul ſick; I am ſick of love;" men muſt not always expect to find this. I ſay then, although ſomewhat in your heart draw back, yet if you can ſay that you are convinced of your broken ſtate without him, that you want a righteouſneſs to cover

your guilt, and that you want ſtrength to ſtand out againſt ſin, or to do what is pleaſing before God, and that you alſo ſee fulneſs in him; in both theſe reſpects, if you dare ſay, that ſomewhat within your heart would be fain at him upon his own terms, and would have both righteouſneſs for juſtification, and ſtrength in order to ſanctification; and that what is within you contradicting this is your burden in ſome meaſure, and your bondage: if it be ſo, your heart is brought up a tolerable length; go on to the buſineſs, and determine the matter by covenanting with God, and ſay with your mouth, "That you have both righteouſneſs and ſtrength in the Lord," as he hath ſworn you ſhall do: It is approven divinity to ſay unto God, I believe, when much miſbelief is in me, and the heart divided in the caſe; "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief." Withal, ſhew unto God how matters are in your heart, that ſo you may be without guile before him, concealing nothing from him; and put your heart as it is in his hand, to write his law on it, according to the covenant; for that is the thing he ſeeks of men, that they deliver up their heart to him, that he may ſtamp it with his whole will, without exception; and if you can heartily conſent unto that, judging Chriſt's blood a ſufficient ranſom and ſatisfaction for man's tranſgreſſion, you may go and expreſsly ſtrike covenant with God, for your heart and affection is already engaged.

Object. I dare not ſo covenant with God, leſt I break to him; yea, I perſuade myſelf, that if ſuch a temptation did offer, ſo and ſo circumſtantiated, I would fall before it and ſuccumb: therefore, to tranſact ſo with God whilſt I foreſee ſuch a thing were but to heighten my condemnation.

Anſw. (1.) You have already entered covenant with God, as you are a member of his viſible church; and what is now preſſed upon you is, but that you more heartily, ſincerely, particularly, and more expreſsly covenant and tranſact with him: you are already obliged

heartily to cloſe with God in Chriſt, and if you do it in heart, I hope the hazard is no greater by ſaying that you do ſo, or have done ſo.

(2.) What will you do if you ſhift hearty tranſacting with God in Chriſt, and do not accept his peace as it is offered? You have not a ſecond of it in the world; either you muſt do this or periſh for ever: and if you do it with your heart, you may alſo ſay it with your tongue.

(3.) If people may ſcar at covenanting with God, becauſe they will afterwards tranſgreſs, then not one man ſhould covenant with God; for ſurely every one will tranſgreſs afterwards, if they live any length of time after the tranſaction: and we know no way like this to ſecure men from falling; for if you covenant honeſtly with him, he engageth, beſide the new heart, to put his fear and law therein, to give his Spirit to cauſe you to walk in his way. And when you covenant with God, you deliver up yourſelf unto him, to be ſanctified and made conform to his will. It is rather a giving up of yourſelf to be led in his way in all things, and kept from every evil way, than any formal engagement on your part to keep his way, and to hold off from evil: ſo that you need not ſcar at the covenant, the language whereof is, "Wilt thou not be made clean?" And all that ſhun to ſtrike covenant with God, do thereby declare that they deſire not to be made clean.

(4.) As it is hard for any to ſay confidently they will tranſgreſs, if ſuch a temptation did offer, ſo and ſo circumſtantiated, becauſe men may think that either God will keep a temptation out of their way, or not ſuffer them to be tempted above what they are able to bear, or give to them a way of eſcape; "God is our refuge and ſtrength, a very preſent help in trouble. There hath no temptation taken you, but ſuch as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not ſuffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the temptation alſo make a way to eſcape, that ye may be able to bear it." So the queſtion is not, what I may do afterwards;

but, what I now reſolve to do? If my heart charge me preſently with any deceit or reſolution to tranſgreſs, I muſt lay aſide that deceit before I tranſact with God; but if my heart charge me with no ſuch purpoſe, yea, I dare ſay I reſolve againſt every tranſgreſſion; and although I think I will fall before ſuch and ſuch a temptation, yet that thought floweth not from any allowed and approven reſolution to do ſo, but from knowledge of my own corruption, and of what I have done to provoke God to deſert me; but the Lord knows I reſolve not to tranſgreſs, nor do I approve any ſecret inclination of my heart to ſuch a ſin, but would reckon it my ſingular mercy to be kept from ſin in ſuch a caſe; and I judge myſelf a wretched man, becauſe of ſuch a body of death within me, which doth threaten to make me tranſgreſs; in that caſe, I ſay, "my heart doth not condemn me, therefore may and ought to have confidence before God," if this then be the caſe, I ſay to thee, although thou ſhouldſt afterwards fail many ways, and ſo perhaps draw upon thyſelf ſad temporal ſtrokes thereby, and loſe for a ſeaſon many expreſſions of his love; yet "there is an Advocate with the Father to plead thy pardon," who hath ſatisfied for our breaches; "He we wounded for our tranſgreſſions, he was bruiſed for our iniquities; the chaſtiſement of our peace was upon him, and with his ſtripes we are healed. All we like ſheep have gone aſtray, we have turned every one to his own way, and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." And for his ſake, God reſolveth to hold faſt the covenant with men afier their tranſgreſſion; "If his children forſake my law, and walk not in my judgments; if they break my ſtatutes, and keep not my commandments:—Nevertheleſs, my loving-kindneſs will I not utterly take from him, nor ſuffer my faithfulneſs to fail; my covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I ſworn by my holineſs"—Elſe how could he be ſaid "to bethrothe us unto himſelf for ever?" And how could the covenant be called "everlaſting,

ordered in all things and ſure," if there were not ground of comfort in it, "even when our houſe is not ſo and ſo with God.

Yea, it were no better than the covenant of works, if theſe who enter it with God could ſo depart from him again, as to make it void unto themſelves, and to put themſelves into a worſe condition than they were in before they made it: "And I will make an everlaſting covenant with them, and I will not turn away from them to do them good"—compared with *Heb.* viii. 6. "But now hath he obtained a more excellent miniſtry, by how much more alſo he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was eſtabliſhed upon better promiſes. "The Lord hateth putting away." No honeſt heart will ſtumble on this, but will rather be ſtrengthened thereby in duty; *Hoſ.* xiv. 4. to the end, "I will heal their backſliding, I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away from him——Who is wiſe and he ſhall underſtand theſe things? Prudent and he ſhall know them? For the ways of the Lord are right, and the juſt ſhall walk in them." For other ties and bonds, beſides the fear of divorce, and puniſhment by death to oblige the ingenuous wife unto duty; ſo here men will "fear the Lord and his goodneſs."

Object. I have, at the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and at ſome other occaſions, covenanted expreſsly and verbally with God; but my fruitleſſneſs in his ways, and the renewed jealouſies of my gracious ſtate, maketh me queſtion if ever I tranſacted with God in ſincerity, and I think I can do it no otherwiſe than I have done it.

Anſw. (1.) Men are not to expect fruitfulneſs according to their deſire, nor full aſſurance of God's favour immediately after they have fled unto Chriſt, and expreſsly tranſacted with God in him: theſe things will keep a man on work all his days. The ſaints had their failings and ſhortcomings, yea, and backſlidings, with many fits of dangerous miſbelief, after they had very

ſeriouſly and ſincerely, and expreſsly cloſed with God, as their God in Chriſt.

(2.) Many do look for fruitfulneſs in their walk and eſtabliſhment of faith from their own ſincerity in tranſacting with God rather than from the ſpirit of the Lord Jeſus. They fixed their heart in their own honeſty and reſolutions, and not in the bleſſed root Chriſt Jeſus, without whom we can do nothing, and are vanity altogether in our beſt eſtate. Men ſhould remember, that one piece of grace cannot produce any degree of grace; further nothing can work grace but the arm of JEHOVAH and if men could lean upon Chriſt, and covenant with him as their duty abſolutely, whatſoever may be the conſequence, at leaſt, looking only to him for the ſuitable fruit, it ſhould fare better with them. God pleaſeth not that men ſhould betake themſelves unto Chriſt, and covenant with him for a ſeaſon, until they ſee if ſuch fruit and eſtabliſhment ſhall follow, purpoſing to diſclaim their intereſt in him and the covenant, if ſuch and ſuch fruit does not appear within ſuch a length of time. This is to put the ways of God to trial, and is very diſpleaſing unto him. Men muſt abſolutely cloſe with Chriſt, and covenant with him reſolving to maintain theſe things as their duty, and a ready way to reach fruit, whatſoever ſhall follow thereupon; they having a teſtimony within them, that they ſeriouſly deſign conformity to his revealed will in all things; and that they have cloſed covenant with him for the ſame end, as well as to be ſaved thereby.

(3.) Men ſhould be ſparing to bring in queſtion their ſincerity in tranſacting with God, unleſs they can inſtruct the ſame, or have great preſumptions for it. If you can inſtruct any deceit or guile in your tranſacting with him you are obliged to diſclaim and rectify it, and to tranſact with God honeſtly and without guile: but if you know nothing of your deceit or guile in the day you did tranſact with him; Yea, if you can ſay, that you did appeal unto God in that day that you dealt honeſtly

with him, and intended not to deceive; and did obteſt him, according to his faithfulneſs, to ſearch and try if here was any crookedneſs in your way, and to diſcover t unto you, and heal it; "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts: and ee if there be any wicked way in me; and lead me in he way everlaſting; and that afterwards you "came to he light, that your deeds might be manifeſt;" and if you an ſay, that God's anſwers from his word to you, in ſo ar as you could underſtand, were anſwers of peace, and confirmations of your ſincerity; yea, further, if you dare ay, that if upon life and death you were again to tranſact with him, you can do it no other way, nor intend nore ſincerity and ſerioufneſs than before; then I dare ay unto thee, in the Lord's name, thou ought not to queſtion thy ſincerity in tranſacting with God, but to "have confidence before God, ſince thy heart doth not condemn thee;" and thou art bound to believe that "God dealeth uprightly with the upright man, and with the pure doth ſhew himſelf pure." If a man intend honeſty, God will not ſuffer him to beguile himſelf; yea, he Lord ſuffereth no man to deceive himſelf, unleſs the man intend to deceive both God and men.

(4.) Therefore impute your unfruitfulneſs to your unwatchfulneſs and your miſbelief, and impute your want of full aſſurance unto an evil heart of unbelief, helped by Satan to act againſt the glorious free grace of God; and charge not theſe things upon want of ſincerity in your cloſing with Chriſt. And reſolve henceforth to abide cloſe by the root, and you ſhall bring forth more fruit; and by much fruit you lay yourſelf open to the witneſs of God's Spirit, which will teſtify with your ſpirit that you have ſincerely and honeſtly cloſed with God, and that the reſt of your works are wrought in God, and approven of him; and ſo the witneſs of the ſpirit and the water joining with the blood, whereupon you are to lay the weight of your ſoul and conſcience, and where alone you are to ſink the curſes of the law due unto you

for all your ſins, and failings in your beſt things: theſe three do agree in one, *viz.* that this is the way of life and peace, and that you have intereſt therein, and ſo you come to quietneſs and full aſſurance; "Abide in me, and I in you: as the branch cannot bear fruit of itſelf, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye, except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches; he that abideth in me, and I in him, the ſame bringeth forth much fruit; for without me ye can do nothing." "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me, and he that loveth me, ſhall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifeſt myſelf to him. If a man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." The Spirit itſelf beareth witneſs with our ſpirit that we are the children of God." "There are three that bear witneſs in earth, the ſpirit, and the water, and the blood; and theſe three agree in one."

O bleſſed bargain of the new covenant, and thrice bleſſed Mediator of the ſame! Let him ride proſperouſly, and ſubdue nations and languages, and gather in all his jewels, that honorable company of the firſt-born, that ſtately troop of kings and prieſts, whoſe glory it ſhall be to have waſhed their garments in the blood of that ſpotleſs Lamb, and whoſe happineſs ſhall continually flouriſh in following him whitherſoever he goeth, and in being in the immediate company of the Ancient of days, one ſight of whoſe face ſhall make them in a manner forget that ever they were in the earth. Oh if I could perſuade men to believe that theſe things are not *yea* and *nay*, and to make haſte towards him, who haſteth to judge the world, and to call men to an account, eſpecially concerning their improvement of this goſpel. "Even ſo, come Lord Jeſus."

THE SPIRITUAL STEWARD.

A

SERMON,

PREACHED

AT THE MEETING OF

THE ASSOCIATE REFORMED SYNOD,

IN THE CITY OF NEW-YORK,

OCTOBER 21, 1802.

BY THE REV. ALEXANDER PROUDFIT,

MINISTER OF THE GOSPEL, SALEM.

LANSINGBURGH:

PRINTED BY GARDINER TRACY.

1803.

1. Clergy — Duty and life

PREFACE.

THE following diſcourſe, with a very few additions and alterations, makes its appearance from the preſs preciſely as it was delivered from the pulpit. It would be vanity the moſt inexcuſable in the Author, to affect throwing any light on the duties of the miniſterial office, which have been ſo frequently and ſo fully diſcuſſed by perſons of maturer age, of greater experience, and whoſe ſituation in life opens larger ſources of information on this and every other ſubject. In the providence of God he was called to preach on that public occaſion; and at the repeated requeſt of ſome, whoſe judgment he ought to reſpect, he ventures the ſermon to the world. The author truſts, that it may occaſionally ſerve at leaſt as a monitor to himſelf, and through the bleſſing of that ſovereign God, who makes fooliſh things to confound the wiſe, and weak things to confound the mighty, may not be altogether unprofitable to fellow laborers in the vineyard of Jehovah.

All who are in the leaſt degree verſed in the hiſtory of the church; who are acquainted with her

proſperities and adverſities, and the cauſes which produced them, muſt be impreſſed with the unutterable importance of her miniſtry. On the prudence of the ambaſſadors of Jeſus, their patience, their ſelf-denial, their fervent zeal, their deep acquaintance with the myſteries of the kingdom, and their holy heroiſm in defending them, depend intimately, under God, the ſucceſs and the glory of chriſtianity. They are in ſcripture emphatically repreſented under the emblem of ſtars; and if they are obſcured, either by ignorance or error, a general darkneſs muſt envelope the horizon of the church. Natural talents and human learning are little noticed in the following character of the goſpel ſteward; becauſe however important theſe qualifications are, they are of inferior importance; they become uſeful and ornamental, preciſely in proportion as they are ſanctified by the ſpirit of Jeſus, and conſecrated to the ſervice of his croſs. If thoſe who bear the veſſels of the Lord be erroneous, the more ſucceſsful they are, the more dangerous, by rendering others tenfold more the children of darkneſs than formerly. If they appear indolent and indifferent, their example foſters careleſſneſs in their hearers, and tends to lull them deeper and deeper in the ſlumbers of perdition. The ordinary Paſtor, no leſs than the extraordinary Apoſtle, ſhould he poſſeſs all knowledge and all myſteries,

yet, without charity, muſt become *as ſounding braſs, and a tinkling cymbal.* Intellectual endowments, unaccompanied by divine grace, like the blazing comet, may dazzle and aſtoniſh, while he who endures all things for the elect's ſake, like the ſun in the firmament, exhilarates and cheriſhes as he ſhines.

If the preſent diſcourſe is made inſtrumental, in impreſſing a ſingle ambaſſador of Jeſus with more becoming conceptions of the importance of his office, or of awakening one to greater induſtry, greater importunity in diſcharging the duties of his office, the author will conſider himſelf more than rewarded; and would now, and eternally, aſcribe all to the glory of that ſovereignty, which out of *the mouth of babes and ſucklings* has perfected ſtrength.

SALEM, *December* 24, 1802.

THE

SPIRITUAL STEWARD.

1 Cor. iv. 1.—"*Stewards of the myſteries of God.*"

THE grace and ſovereignty of Jehovah illuſtriouſly ſhine in our redemption, through the croſs of Immanuel. It is a manifeſtation of grace the moſt marvellous, the moſt glorious, that any of our family ſhould be reſtored; that after our wilful apoſtacy from the government of God, and rebellion againſt his crown, we ſhould be reinſtated in his favor, dignified with the name and diſtinguiſhed with the inheritance of ſons. It excites admiration in the higheſt, that our recovery ſhould be accompliſhed by a plan ſo peculiar, a ſcheme ſo coſtly, as the ſubſtitution and death of his *only begotten*, eternally *beloved Son.* "*Herein is love: Not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and ſent his Son to be the propitiation for our ſins.*"

Sovereignty alſo mingles her glories with thoſe of grace, in every part of this wondrous diſpenſation. While grace diſplays her exceeding riches

in the ſalvation of any, ſovereignty ſhines myſterious and awful in determining the objects of this ſalvation; in chooſing ſome to adoption, to reconciliation, to eternal life; while others of the ſame nation, of the ſame ſociety, of the ſame family, under the ſame opportunities of inſtruction, under the ſame offers of mercy, are utterly paſſed by; are delivered up to *blindneſs of mind, hardneſs of heart*, to a rejection of Jeſus, the only ſacrifice for ſin, as a pledge of eternal condemnation hereafter.

Jehovah appears no leſs an adorable ſovereign, in the very inſtruments by whom this redemption is applied to *the election of grace*. Whom does he uſually raiſe up and employ for this important purpoſe? Does he faſten upon the unſinning angels, thoſe exalted ſpirits who baſk in the glories of his throne, whoſe larger capacities qualify them for underſtanding more fully, and unfolding more perfectly, the myſteries of redemption? No; their apoſtate tribes are not choſen to be the bleſſed partakers of this ſalvation; neither are their unſinning tribes honored to be inſtrumental in applying it. What rank of the human *family* is ordinarily employed for promoting the kingdom of *Jeſus*, and applying to the ſouls of others the reconciliation of his croſs? Does the living God raiſe up ſome preternatural order, perſons ſuperior to their fellow-creatures, naturally diſtinguiſhed by purer morals,

by a more comprehenſive underſtanding or commanding utterance? No; was this the plan purſued by the Eternal, the ſucceſs of his goſpel would probably be aſcribed to the excellence of the inſtruments employed. The veſſel naturally moſt frail, moſt foul, debaſed by every ſpecies of open and groſs abomination, has frequently been purified, and appointed to contain this immortal treaſure. "*Baſe things of the world, and things which are deſpiſed, hath God choſen, that no fleſh ſhould glory in his preſence.*" He ordinarily uſes inſtruments the moſt inſignificant, ſeemingly the moſt unequal to the work, that his own wiſdom, and power, and ſovereignty, may more viſibly be traced in every part of the diſpenſation. A few fiſhermen, perſons of low occupation in life, unlearned in the ſciences, and unſkilled in the policies of this world, were ſelected as the uſual companions of our Lord; and their preaching, afterwards, was the great engine of ſpreading his goſpel among the nations of the earth. Saul, once a malignant *perſecutor*, a man *injurious* to the Redeemer's cauſe, who had uttered the foulеſt blaſphemies againſt the Saviour's croſs; this very Saul is converted and rendered the chief apoſtle of this very croſs; glories in it as his only ſalvation; proclaims it as the only hope of periſhing ſinners. "*We have this treaſure,*" he exclaims, adoring equally the depth of divine condeſcenſion

and ſovereignty—" *We have this treaſure in earthen veſſels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. We are ſtewards of the myſteries of God.*"

The term *myſteries*, here uſed by the apoſtle, occurs very frequently in the volume of divine inſpiration. Without enquiring particularly into its real origin, or uſual ſignification, it may be ſufficient to remark, that *myſteries*, as employed in the ſacred oracles, generally imply thoſe truths which our reaſon, unaſſiſted by revelation, could never have diſcovered; and which, after they are revealed, our finite, contracted underſtandings, are incapable fully to comprehend. The myſteries committed to the miniſters of reconciliation, ſimply imply the everlaſting goſpel; all thoſe doctrines, all that diſcipline; thoſe ſeals of the covenant alſo, which are employed by the adorable head of the church, for the inſtruction, the correction and edification of his ſpiritual houſehold.

The perſons entruſted with theſe myſteries are denominated *ſtewards*. There is an evident alluſion to a practice which prevailed in early periods of the world; particularly in the families of the opulent and honorable. A perſon of known integrity and talents was choſen, to whom, under the char-

ſter of a *ſteward*, the proprietor of the houſe committed the immediate diſpoſal of his goods, and management of his family; accountable, however, in all reſpects, to him by whom he was appointed to this ſtewardſhip. We read in ſacred hiſtory, of a ſteward in the family of Abraham, in the family of Joſeph, in the families of particular kings of Iſrael and Chaldea. This character is frequently applied to the miniſters of reconciliation, and expreſſes the great importance and awful reſponſibility of their office. By Jeſus Jehovah, the ſupreme Ruler and Lawgiver of the divine houſe, they are now entruſted with the treaſure of the goſpel. This they are required to diſpenſe to his family on earth, as they muſt anſwer hereafter, *at his appearing and kingdom.*

The pertinency of the ſubject to the preſent occaſion, is abundantly obvious. We are ordinarily employed in illuſtrating and enforcing the duty of others, as men: It is more appropriate, at preſent, to illuſtrate and apply our own obligations as miniſters. May the unction of the Holy One liberally deſcend, and influence every heart, while we attempt—

I. To enumerate a few of thoſe myſteries which are contained in the goſpel: And,

II. Illuſtrate the character and obligations of thoſe to whom theſe myſteries are entruſted: *Stewards*—Stewards of the myſteries of God.

1. The Trinity in Jehovah, may be numbered among the myſteries of the goſpel: Three adorable perſons, neceſſarily, eſſentially, eternally *equal*;—ONE in eſſence, ONE in perfection and glory. This doctrine was revealed obſcurely in the Old Teſtament; but is taught with greater perſpicuity and glory in the New. The apoſtle ſpeaks of "*the myſtery of God, and of the Father, and of Chriſt.*" An evangeliſt announces, that "*there be Three which bare record in heaven; the Father, and the Word, and the Holy Ghoſt: Theſe Three are One.*" This truth is taught, not barely as a ſubject of ſpeculation to the underſtanding, but a ſource of rich, unutterable conſolation to the heart. The believer in Jeſus is privileged to enjoy real, diſtinct communion with each of the adorable Three; with the Father in his love; with the Son in his grace; with the Holy Ghoſt in his ſanctifying, comforting influences. It conſtitutes the privilege, and ſecurity, and glory, of each heir of ſalvation, that he is "*elected according to the foreknowledge of God, the Father, through ſanctification of the ſpirit, unto obedience and ſprinkling of the blood of Jeſus Chriſt*;" and that once elected, and ſanctified, and juſtified, he ſhall be infallibly and everlaſtingly glorified.

2. The incarnation of the eternal Son, is another myſtery of the ever glorious goſpel. "*Without controverſy, great is the myſtery of godlineſs: God manifeſted in the fleſh.*" His aſſumption of our nature, appropriating our guilt, ſuffering in our room, bringing in everlaſting righteouſneſs for our reconciliation, forms an eſſential, a moſt intereſting part of that heavenly treaſure committed to our truſt; and ought to conſtitute *the Alpha and Omega* of every adminiſtration, whether public or private.—From Jeſus and his croſs, all the revelation of God derives its meaning, its value and glory. There the law of Moſes, with its coſtly obſervances, the predictions of prophets, and the preaching of apoſtles, all meet, as their common centre. For Meſſiah's appearance in the fleſh, and his accompliſhment of our redemption, believers under the Old Teſtament looked forward with anxious expectation; and to theſe events, the ranſomed, through eternity, will look back with adoring gratitude: They will be ever acknowledging this *deceaſe, accompliſhed at Jeruſalem*, as the foundation of all they expected on earth, and all they experience in heaven. In Chriſt, and him crucified, all the perfections of Deity are glorified to the very uttermoſt: The law is magnified in its precept, vindicated in its penalty; the injuries of juſtice repaired; the offence of holineſs removed; while mercy, grace and condeſcenſion

ſhine with unparalleled luſtre. Through Chriſt, and him crucified, all the wants of the ſinner are ſupplied. By the blood of his covenant, ſprinkled upon the conſcience, the vileſt of the vile *are purged from dead works.* Through his righteouſneſs imputed, they are completely and eternally juſtified in the ſight of Jehovah; and by his grace, ſhed abroad through their hearts, they are ſanctified and prepared for the inheritance of immortality. So important, ſo glorious is this myſtery, the Son of God incarnate, and ſuffering for our ſins, that patriarchs *rejoiced*, leaped up, *to ſee his day afar off*; prophets enquired diligently, who *teſtified beforehand the ſufferings of Chriſt, and the glory that ſhould follow*; apoſtles determined to know *nothing but Jeſus Chriſt, and him crucified*; angels look into it, with ever *new*, ever increaſing admiration.

3. The regeneration and ſanctification of the ſinner, by the eternal Spirit, is another myſtery, with which, as ſtewards in the family of Jeſus, we are entruſted. The apoſtle, therefore, pronounces it not only a *myſtery of godlineſs, God manifeſted in the fleſh*, but *believed on in the world*, and ſpeaks in another epiſtle of the *myſtery of faith.* This grace, which unites the ſinner to the Saviour, and intereſts him in the *great ſalvation*, is effected in a manner utterly inconceivable to us. Although the

change produced in the ſoul, at its tranſlation from death to life, is abundantly obvious; new fears, new deſires, new joys, new hopes, inſtantly ſpring up; yet the manner by which this change is produced is altogether myſterious, utterly unſearchable by us. "*The wind bloweth where it liſteth; we hear the ſound thereof, but cannot tell whence it cometh, or whither it goeth; ſo is every one that is born of the Spirit.*" Who can conceive or deſcribe that gracious influence, by which the underſtanding, once dark, is now enlightened; the will once ſtubborn, is now ſubdued *to the obedience of faith;* the affections, formerly ſenſual and earthly, are now elevated to things ſpiritual and divine; the whole man transformed, tranſlated from death to life, from corruption to holineſs, from things temporal to things eternal. The believer himſelf, although the favored ſubject of this ſanctifying Spirit, is unable to trace the manner of his operations. He can, however, maintain, and maintain with a confidence which all the ſophiſtry of earth or hell ſhall never be able to overthrow, "*whereas I was blind, now I ſee.*" I diſcover new excellencies and glories in the Saviour, new wiſdom and condeſcenſion in the method of reconciliation through his obedience and croſs, new ſweetneſs and preciouſneſs in the promiſes, new ſuitableneſs and ſufficiency in

the everlaſting covenant. Theſe are *all my ſalvation, and all my deſire.*

4. To theſe we may add, the reſurrection of the body; the awards of the general judgment; the adjudication of the righteous to endleſs life, of the wicked to endleſs perdition; as other myſteries of the goſpel committed to our charge. The manner by which the reſurrection from the dead will be effected; the particular body in which they ſhall appear; the part of the univerſe where all the nations, when raiſed, ſhall be placed; the procedure of the great Judge in determining their unalterable doom; the inſtrumentality of elect angels in raiſing the dead, in arranging them for judgment, in conducting the righteous to manſions of bliſs, and hurrying the damned to their gloomy abodes, are inconceivable to us. "*Behold*," ſays the apoſtle, "*behold I ſhew you a myſtery: We ſhall not all ſleep; but we ſhall be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the laſt trump: For the trumpet ſhall ſound, and the dead ſhall be raiſed incorruptible, and we ſhall be changed: For this corruptible muſt put on incorruption, and this mortal muſt put on immortality.*"

Theſe are a part of thoſe myſteries, with which, as ſtewards of the kingdom, we are ſolemnly entruſted. Theſe it becomes us to diſpenſe,

without reſerve, without partiality, without hypocriſy, to that houſe over which *the Holy Ghoſt hath made us overſeers.*

Having attempted briefly to enumerate theſe myſteries, we proceed—

II. To illuſtrate the character and obligation of thoſe to whom they are committed: *Stewards—Stewards of the myſteries of God.*

1. The ſteward is freely elected and appointed by the proprietor of the houſe. He who daringly ruſhes into the family of another, and takes poſſeſſion of his property without a regular invitation, is chargeable equally with preſumption and folly. He can neither aſk the preſent ſupport of his maſter, nor afterwards expect a reward from his hand. Equally neceſſary is it that the miniſter of reconciliation be divinely choſen to that office; that he be duly called by Jeſus Jehovah, the great maſter of the ſpiritual houſe. No emergence of the church, however peculiar; no neceſſity for laborers, however preſſing; no advantages ariſing from natural talents, from the aids of education, or other conſiderations, can juſtify any in aſſuming the miniſterial office, unleſs lawfully called. The ſovereign Lord

of the houſe, jealous of his royal prerogatives, meets the intruder with that heart rending challenge—"*Who hath required this at your hand?*" and writes his preſumption in his puniſhment—"*I have not ſent him, nor commanded him: Therefore he ſhall not profit this people at all. No man taketh this honor to himſelf, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.*" Let us pauſe a moment, and impartially enquire—Are we ſent and appointed of the Lord God to this ſtewardſhip? Have we been careful to make *ſure* our *calling and election*, not only as men, but as miniſters? This queſtion intimately concerns the glory of that Jeſus whom we ſerve; the dignity of that cauſe in which we are embarked; the edification of that church which we are appointed to overſee; our own peace, and confidence, and triumph, as individuals. How would it ſupport in the hour of difficulty; how would it embolden in the diſcharge of every duty, could we carry our commiſſion in our hand, and with the prophet confidently proclaim—"*The Lord God and his Spirit hath ſent me.*" Then might we daily look up to our maſter, for ſtrength proportioned to our daily croſs, and expect his bleſſing on thoſe labors which we perform in obedience to his command.

A full, formal enquiry, into the nature of this call to the miniſterial office, is not intended at preſ-

ent. It may not, however, be impertinent to remark, that he who is divinely choſen to this work, will experience the love of Jehovah the Redeemer, kindling in his heart. He will feel this heavenly flame burning up the droſs of ſelf-eaſe, ſelf-intereſt, ſelf-promotion. He will be conſtrained by a holy, an irreſiſtible neceſſity, *to preach the goſpel; to ſpend, and to be ſpent;* to occupy his time, his talents, in promoting the kingdom of that Jeſus who bought us with his blood. His boſom will occaſionally melt with tender compaſſion towards his brethren, by nature, who are in danger of periſhing eternally. He will cheerfully renounce each worldly proſpect, his temporal eaſe and indulgence, nay, life itſelf, to become inſtrumental in reſcuing them from never ending ruin. Animated with the ſame ſpirit, he will burſt forth in the exclamation of the great apoſtle—"*I endure all things for the elect's ſake, that they may obtain ſalvation, which is in Chriſt Jeſus, with eternal glory.*"

2. The ſteward acting agreeably to his ſtation, aims at adapting himſelf to the varied circumſtances of the houſehold. He endeavors to diſpenſe that portion which is moſt ſuited to their peculiar age and neceſſities. This will equally be the concern of each ſteward in the heavenly family, who has imbibed the ſpirit of his office. This is called in ſcrip-

ture, "*rightly dividing the word of truth; giving to every one their portion of meat in due ſeaſon;*" and may with propriety be pronounced the moſt difficult part of miniſterial duty. Much diligence is requiſite for knowing the ſtate of *our flock*; and much diſcernment for accommodating our public adminiſtrations to their reſpective capacities. Some are ignorant, and require inſtruction; others are ſecure, and ought to be alarmed; others are preſumptuous, and require to be ſhaken from their unſcriptural confidences. The weak need to be ſtrengthened; the wavering to be confirmed; the wandering to be reſtored; the fearful to be emboldened; the drooping to be ſupported, with the conſolations of the covenant.

Could no other argument be adduced, this abundantly evinces the propriety of a ſtationary miniſtry, and of each miniſter familiarly viſiting and converſing with his flock. The phyſician muſt examine his patient, before he can adminiſter his medicine with judgment: The vine-dreſſer muſt go from tree to tree, before he knows whether to dig around and dung, or with a pruning-knife to lop off the exuberant branch: The teacher muſt enquire into the age of the ſcholar, his ability, his progreſs in learning, before he can judiciouſly direct his future ſtudies. Thus he who would approve himſelf faithful

to his adorable maſter, or become ſucceſsful in the ſalvation of ſouls, muſt diligently, muſt painfully enquire into their ſcriptural condition.

Bear with me, reſpected Fathers and Brethren, if I take the liberty of enlarging on this duty; becauſe it is ſcarcely more important than unfaſhionable; and probably the languor of living godlineſs in our churches, the rare inſtances of converſion under our adminiſtrations, may be aſcribed partly, if not principally, to this neglect. We are not capable rightly to divide the word of truth; to diſpenſe in public the myſteries of the kingdom, according to the circumſtances of the family; becauſe we are not more employed in private converſing with the family, enquiring into their various exerciſes, their anxieties, their doubts, their diſcouragements.—Conſequences the moſt glorious attended the revival of this primitive practice in Geneva, under the miniſtry of Calvin, and in various other places, at the commencement of the reformation. While miniſters, with their ruling elders, induſtriouſly went around from houſe to houſe; while they carried their appeal immediately to the ſinner's conſcience, *teaching every man, and warning every man*, their labors became eminently ſucceſsful: The ignorant were inſtructed; the ſecure alarmed; the weak, the deſpondent, ſtrengthened and edified.

3. The ſteward endeavors to manifeſt forbearance with the members of the houſe. Concern for the intereſts of his lord, induces him to exerciſe patience, not only with the weakneſs, but even the wickedneſs of thoſe committed to his charge. A diſpoſition, this, of difficult attainment; yet indiſpenſibly requiſite in the miniſter of reconciliation. Numerous inſults, much deriſion, muſt be expected. Thoſe who are at eaſe will frequently deride our admonitions as impertinent; as only calculated to ruffle their repoſe. The drunkard will revile us as unneceſſarily preciſe; as unfriendly to human happineſs. The impure will attempt juſtifying themſelves, by the backſlidings of Lot, of David, and other eminent ſaints. The ſwearer will probably reward our rebukes with replying, that he intended no evil, or that he injured none but himſelf. All this inſult muſt be expected; all this, out of compaſſion to precious, periſhing ſouls, ought patiently to be endured. Although the drowning man does not immediately ſeize the rope thrown out for his relief; yet a concern for his preſervation would oblige to continue the offer. Although the man conflicting with ſome malignant diſeaſe, through ignorance, may reject the medicine when adminiſtered; yet a regard for his recovery will conſtrain to repeat the application. Rather, infinitely rather, ſhould we patiently perſevere with ſinners, when their ſal-

vation or damnation for eternity are at ſtake. "*The ſervant of the Lord muſt not ſtrive, but be gentle to all; apt to teach; patient in meekneſs; inſtructing thoſe that oppoſe themſelves; if God peradventure will give them repentance, to the acknowledging of the truth.*" "*Reprove, rebuke, exhort,*" is the apoſtolic injunction, "*with all long-ſuffering and doctrine.*"—Our feelings may rather be injured for a time, than their ſouls damned for eternity. Beſides, the *converſion of ſinners* ſo obſtinate, conſtitutes our nobleſt triumphs; it excites in the ſpirits of the juſt the loudeſt hallelujahs now, and will form the brighteſt jewels in our crown hereafter. Noble, in this reſpect, worthy our imitation, was the conduct of the apoſtles of the Lamb—"*Being reviled, we bleſs; being perſecuted, we ſuffer it; being defamed, we intreat; leſt we ſhould hinder the goſpel of Chriſt.*"

But this forbearance is not neceſſary barely towards the unprincipled and profligate; there is equal neceſſity of exerciſing it towards the living members of the body of Chriſt. As in the family of nature, ſo in the family of grace, there is an almoſt infinite variety of diſpoſition. Much imperfection adheres to the beſt, ariſing partly from ignorance, partly from prejudices of education, and cuſtom; partly from the remains of a legal ſpirit, and various other cauſes; and a concern for their edification calls loudly for the exerciſe of prudence

and patience. It is probably to this yielding, accommodating diſpoſition, the apoſtle alludes in the following paſſage :—" *Unto the Jew, I became as a Jew ; that I might gain the Jew. To the weak, I became as weak ; that I might gain the weak. I am made all things to all men ; that I might by all means ſave ſome.*"

4. The ſteward is in all reſpects reſponſible to him by whom he was called to the office. He is anſwerable for every part of his conduct ; not only for the diſpoſition of his maſter's goods, but alſo for his behaviour towards the members of the houſe. An impreſſion of our reſponſibility as officers in the family of Jeſus, ought to reign ſupreme in our hearts, and rouſe to the moſt diligent diſcharge of every duty. It is the polar ſtar, to which every adminiſtration, both public and private, ought unvaryingly to centre. The great ruler of the houſe, in committing the treaſure to his different ſtewards, poſitively commands, " *Occupy until I come ;*" when the reckoning will be required. While this conſideration calls to unwearied diligence in diſcharging the duties of our high vocation, it alſo requires the moſt rigid impartiality in diſpenſing the myſteries of the kingdom. Solemn, awful conſideration ! For each diſtribution of this ſacred proviſion ; for every admiſſion to, or exclu-

ſion from, the privileges of the houſe, we muſt give account to HIM, *whoſe eyes are as a flame of fire*; who is now our omniſcient witneſs; who will ſhortly appear as our impartial Judge, and *render to every man according to his work.* This all-ſolemn reflection did the great God, our Saviour, frequently revive in the minds of his apoſtles; and by it admoniſhed them to unwearied induſtry and zeal in his ſervice. "*Behold I come quickly: Hold faſt that which thou haſt. Watch ye, therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord cometh. Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning, and ye yourſelves like unto men that wait for their Lord.*" This awful reflection did the great apoſtle urge powerfully on Timothy, his ſon; and through him on the ſervants of the croſs, in every ſucceeding age: "*I charge thee, therefore, before God and the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who ſhall judge the quick and the dead, at his appearing and kingdom; preach the word; do the work of an evangeliſt; make full proof of thy miniſtry.*"

5. The ſteward naturally expects a ſuitable reward for his ſervices. He looks up to the proprietor of the houſe for an honorable compenſation. In this reſpect, our divinely gracious maſter has given the ſtewards in his family the moſt abundant

ſoul-ſupporting encouragement. While he forewarned us, without reſerve, of all the pain, the poverty, the reproach, the perſecution, which might be expected; that we ſhould be *hated of all men for his name's ſake;* deſpiſed by the gay, as gloomy and melancholy; ridiculed by the worldly wiſe, as ignorant and enthuſiaſtic; reproached by the great, as mean and contemptible; diſdained by the carnally ſecure, as diſturbing the peace of ſociety, as *turning the world upſide down;* he encourages, amidſt all this contempt, with the proſpect of an *exceeding and eternal weight of glory.* "*There is no man, that hath forſaken,*" is his own declaration; a declaration, full of condeſcenſion on his part—full of conſolation on ours: "*There is no man, that hath forſaken houſes, or brethren, or lands, for my ſake and the goſpel, but he ſhall receive an hundred fold; now, in the preſent time, with perſecutions; and in the world to come, eternal life.*" Does our profeſſion expoſe to outward poverty? He promiſes in reverſion his own *unſearchable riches.* Are we called to take up our croſs? This will ſhortly be ſucceeded by a crown incorruptible. Does our maſter call to unwearied diligence, to be *inſtant in ſeaſon and out of ſeaſon?* This ſhall be rewarded by an eternity of eaſe and enjoyment. "*They ſhall reſt from their labors. To him that overcometh, I will give to ſit down with me on my throne.*" How did the ſoul

of the great apoſtle ſwell beyond the chains of perſecution, and riſe ſuperior to all oppoſition, while he contemplated that glory which was afterwards to to be revealed. This proſpect ſeemingly ſoftened the rigors of fatigue, gilded the gloom of the dungeon, blunted the edge of the ſword, quenched the violence of flames, and brightened with the light of heaven the dark vale and ſhadow of death. "*None of theſe things trouble me;*" not all that their ingenuity can deviſe, or their power perpetrate: "*Neither hold I my life dear; that I may finiſh my courſe with joy, and the miniſtry which I have received of the Lord Jeſus, to declare the grace of God. If we be dead with him, we ſhall alſo live with him; if we ſuffer with him, we ſhall alſo reign with him.*" Equal to the bold, dignified challenges of his life, were the triumphs of his dying hour. "*I am now ready to be offered; and the time of my departure is at hand.*"

Compared with theſe, how baſe, how contemptible, have been the laſt expreſſions of thoſe admired as heroes, as poets, as philoſophers; of thoſe who by their valour have riſen to empire, or by the efforts of genius have borne away the palm of literary fame. "*I have fought a good fight: I have finiſhed my courſe: I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of right-*

couſneſs, which the Lord, the righteous judge, ſhall give me at that day; and not to me only, but to all them that love his appearing."

The application ſuggeſted by this doctrine, is equally obvious and intereſting.

1. Since the goſpel of Jehovah is a myſtery, its neglect or oppoſition, by an ungodly age, and even by the worldly wiſe* of that age, is cauſe, neither of ſurpriſe, nor diſcouragement. "The preaching of the croſs is, to them that periſh, fooliſhneſs." "Chriſt crucified," in every period of the world, has been to many, "a ſtone of ſtumbling, and a rock of offence; the ſavour of death unto death." The reaſon is obvious. The human un-

* The author, by no means, acknowledges, that the preponderancy of natural talents, or acquired learning, is, or has been, on the ſide of infidelity; becauſe the contrary is fact. The living God, in righteous ſovereignty, may ſuffer many, who are carnally wiſe, to become ſcriptural fools; yet in different ages, I may add, in every age, ſome who have aſcended the very ſummit of literary eminence, have believed, and advocated our holy religion. Chriſtianity can number among her ſons, a Grotius, a Newton, a Boyle, a Bacon, a Locke, a Milton, an Addiſon; who, for every accompliſhment, both natural and acquired, may be pronounced the brighteſt ornaments of human nature. Theſe illuſtrious men, although they entertained different ſentiments reſpecting particular doctrines of ſcripture, yet cordially concurred in receiving it as a revelation from heaven, and in recommending it as worthy of all acceptation. Even in our

derſtanding is naturally blind, and cannot, of itſelf, diſcover his excellence or glory. The man without eyes, cannot diſcern the light of the ſun, or admire the beauty of colours: He who is deſtitute of hearing, cannot be charmed with the melodies of muſic: Having loſt the ſenſe of ſmelling, he is incapable of reliſhing the fragrance of the roſe. As in natural, in ſpiritual things alſo, ſenſes muſt be poſſeſſed, ſuitable to the objects to be diſcerned. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the ſpirit of God: They are fooliſhneſs unto him: Neither can he know them, becauſe they are ſpiritually diſcerned." Whatever diverſity may appear

---

own age, which a noted blaſphemer† of the Saviour's croſs has complimented as the *age of reaſon*, hundreds can be found, naturally as rational as himſelf, and whoſe reaſon has not been proſtituted by foul intoxication, who believe that all ſcripture is given by inſpiration of God; who have meekneſs and modeſty enough to ſit at the feet of Jeſus, and adore thoſe myſteries of his goſpel, which they are unable fully to comprehend.

† The alluſion to Thomas Paine, the author of the "Age of Reaſon," is too obvious to require explanation. I ſhall, therefore, tranſcribe the very words of a maſterly defender of the Chriſtian faith, reſpecting that retailer of infidelity. "As to Paine, he is well known to have been a profane ſwearer and drunkard. We have evidence upon oath, that religion was his favorite topic when intoxicated."

Fuller's Goſpel its own Witneſs.—Conduct of believers and unbelievers.—Page 98.

among men naturally, ſome poſſeſſing leſſer, others larger capacities; whatever difference may ariſe from the advantages of education; in ſpiritual things all are equally blind, until enlightened by Jehovah the Spirit. "For it is written—"I will deſtroy the wiſdom of the wiſe, and bring to nothing the underſtanding of the prudent." "Where is the wiſe man? Where is the ſcribe? Where is the diſputer of this world? Hath not God made fooliſh the wiſdom of this world?" True it is, eminence of natural genius, improved by liberal learning, and ſanctified by the ſpirit of wiſdom, give an immenſe ſuperiority. Poſſeſſed of ſuch qualifications, the man is capable of ſearching more thoroughly the myſteries of redemption; of pointing out their conſiſtence with the divine character and government; of arranging their doctrines, and ſilencing the cavils of unbelievers. But firſt he muſt *learn of the Father:* Like a ſtar of larger ſize, he may ſhine with ſuperior luſtre; but he himſelf muſt firſt be enlightened by *the Sun of Righteouſneſs.*

2. We learn from this paſſage, what are thoſe truths which ought principally to occupy our attention; which ſhould conſtitute the great theme of our private ſtudies, and public adminiſtration; the plain, peculiar doctrines of the croſs; the ſimple

truths of revelation; neither recommended by human wiſdom, nor accommodated to human prejudice or corruption. We are appointed ſtewards, not of the learning of the ſchools; not of the diſcoveries of philoſophy; not of the charms of moral ſpeculation; but *of the myſteries of God*. Theſe it becomes us humbly to improve, as ſinners, that require a free ſalvation. Theſe it becomes us to diſpenſe, with all ſimplicity, to that houſehold over which "the Holy-Ghoſt hath made us overſeers." This is the proviſion, which the glorious proprietor hath committed to our truſt: And to be addreſſing our hearers with harangues merely moral, with refined ſentiments, or learned ſpeculations, would be to offer *huſks*, or *ſtubble*, or *ſtraw*, while in our *Father's houſe* is bread immortal and divine. Theſe obſervations, however familiar, cannot be too frequently realiſed: They were, perhaps, never more important, nor more ſeaſonable, than in the age in which we live. There is an uncommon affectation, at preſent, to faſhion the goſpel of Jeſus after the wiſdom of the world. Is not natural religion frequently recommended, to the degradation of revealed? Are not virtue, morality, good-will to all, laviſhly extolled; while the cardinal doctrines, of peace with God, through the croſs of Immanuel; juſtification, through his eternal righteouſneſs; regeneration and ſanctification, by the efficacy of his

grace, are overlooked, if not rejected? A late writer, with more hardihood than uſual, has aſcribed the alarming progreſs of infidelity to the preaching of the peculiar doctrines of chriſtianity. On this aſſertion, ſuffice it to remark, that the diſcovery has been made ſince the age of the apoſtles, and is taught by another inſpiration than the Holy-Ghoſt. They ſpake "the wiſdom of God in a myſtery:" They "determined to know nothing but Jeſus Chriſt, and him crucified:" They preached not in "the enticing words of man's wiſdom; leſt the croſs of Chriſt ſhould become of none effect;" but in the "words which the Holy-Ghoſt teacheth; comparing ſpiritual things with ſpiritual." And the fact is too notorious to be denied, that when their ſucceſſors endeavored to recommend themſelves, by blending philoſophy with divinity; the goſpel of Jeſus with the learning of the ſchools; purity of doctrine degenerated in the church,* and living godlineſs languiſhed in the heart. The experiment is equally

* The author takes the liberty of inſerting the following remark, of the very learned and judicious Dr. Owen; and the remark is the more entitled to our attention, as it is founded upon undeniable fact. In his hiſtory of the hereſies which early reproached the church, and the cauſes which produced them, he adds—"The pretended defence of truth, with arts and arms of another kind than the ſimple application of ſcripture, has been the bane of religion, and loſt the peace of chriſtians beyond re-

blaſphemous and vain, to attempt amending the wiſdom of Jehovah by the wiſdom of mortals. Emboldened, therefore, by apoſtolic example, and encouraged by apoſtolic ſucceſs, let us determine to rejoice in nothing as men, to proclaim nothing as miniſters, but *Jeſus Chriſt, and him crucified*; to

---

covery; and it may be obſerved, that whilſt this way alone, the uſe of ſcripture for the preſervation of truth, was inſiſted on, that although innumerable hereſies aroſe one after another, they never made any great progreſs, nor attained unto any ſuch conſiſtency as to make a ſtated oppoſition to the truth; but the errors themſelves, and their authors, were as vagrant meteors, which appeared a little and vaniſhed away. Afterwards it was not ſo, when other ways and means, for the ſuppreſſion of hereſies, were judged convenient and needful. The Lord Chriſt," adds this illuſtrious champion, in language full of conſolation and triumph, "The Lord Chriſt, continueth his word, with the faithful miniſtry, to reveal, declare and vindicate the ſacred truth, for the conviction of gainſayers; and if we are not wanting to our duty, through the aids of divine grace promiſed us, we ſhall finally triumph in this cauſe, and tranſmit this truth, inviolate, to them that ſucceed us in the profeſſion of it."

Owen's preface to his "Perſon and glory of Chriſt."

To this may be added, the remarks of a late, very elegant, and ingenious author. After pronouncing the peculiar doctrines of the croſs to have been the great engine of reformation, he laments our preſent departure from theſe doctrines; and repreſents our preſent degeneracy of practice, as the immediate conſequence of ſuch departure. "They profeſs to make it their chief object to inculcate the moral and practical precepts of chriſtianity, without ſufficiently maintaining, often without juſtly

wield, in our warfare, thoſe weapons which are *not carnal*, but *ſpiritual*; and then we may confidently truſt, that they will be *mighty through God*, for the converſion and ſalvation of ſouls.

Let none conclude from theſe obſervations, that the religion of nature is renounced, or the excellence of morality denied. Shall we be charged with deſpiſing the gentle flowings of the rivulet, merely becauſe we expreſs greater emotions at the more majeſtic movements of the ocean; or with rejecting the light of the ſtars, becauſe we kindle with greater admiration at the more dazzling glories of the ſun? We preach the neceſſity of love to God, not indeed as the foundation of our acceptance, but the effect of his love, *ſhining in the face of Jeſus Chriſt*. We profeſs the neceſſity of repentance, although not the condition of our reconciliation, yet as a grace, wrought in the heart, by the Holy Ghoſt. We exhibit the moral law, not indeed to

---

laying, the grand foundation of the ſinner's acceptance with God, or pointing out how the practical precepts of chriſtianity grow out of her peculiar doctrines, and are inſeparably connected with them. By this fatal error, the very genius and eſſential nature of chriſtianity underwent a change. She no longer retained her peculiar character, or produced that appropriate frame of ſpirit, by which her followers had been characteriſed."

Wilberforce's View—268, 269.

be obeyed for ſalvation, but as fulfilled in its precept by the *life*, as ſatisfied in its penalty by the *death*, of the everlaſting ſurety, and now propoſed as the rule of our obedience in his hand. We maintain the excellence of morality, of love to God, of good will to men, although not as procuring the favor of the Eternal, yet as bleſſed conſequences of our union to the Son of God, and influences derived from him, as our ever-living HEAD. We acknowledge the charms of virtue, of patience under ſuffering, of forgiveneſs to thoſe who injure us, of compaſſion towards our fellow-mortals in diſtreſs: But this virtue, this patience, this forbearance, theſe compaſſions, like ſo many plants of righteouſneſs, muſt grow on Calvary, and be nouriſhed with the blood of its croſs. "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we eſtabliſh the law."

3. We learn from this doctrine, the importance of being wholly occupied in the duties of our office; of being employed, either privately exploring theſe myſteries of the kingdom, or publicly diſtributing them to the neceſſities of the family. It is cauſe of humiliation and grief, that many, who were once ſolemnly conſecrated to the ſervice of the goſpel, afterwards relinquiſh, in part, their occupation: They proſtitute their time and talents to

purpoſes widely different and inferior. One becomes embarraſſed with the cares of this world; another aſſumes the ſtateſman, by engaging in political diſcuſſions; another is involved in philoſophical reſearch, or in ſome other purſuit, foreign to his miniſterial office. Theſe exerciſes, as applied to the ſpiritual ſteward, may be pronounced *ſtriving, but not lawfully.* Thus to be occupied, is indeed running a race, but wandering from the path which leads to the prize. "No man that warreth, entangleth himſelf with the cares of this life; that he may pleaſe him who hath called him to be a ſoldier." What! are not the myſteries of Jehovah incarnate, and our redemption through his blood, ſufficiently ennobling to occupy our individed attention? Here is range, ample, unbounded range, for the moſt ſpeculative underſtanding, for the moſt excurſive imagination. What nobler ſubject can occupy the reſearch of mortals, than the myſtery of a TRIUNE JEHOVAH: THREE in ONE: ONE in THREE? What more exalted theme than GOD, *manifeſted in the fleſh?* That matchleſs, myſterious name, ſo full of grace, ſo full of glory, IMMANUEL; uniting in itſelf, the uncreated, eternal excellencies of the God; the finite, frail properties of the man? What ſubject more elevating in itſelf, more intereſting to us, than the ſubſtitution of the eternal Son in our covenant room? He condemn-

ed, that we might be acquitted? He a man of ſorrows, that we might partake ineffable joy? The Son degraded to the condition of a ſervant, that the ſlave might be promoted to the dignity of ſons! Myſteries theſe, which the intellect of Gabriel, however enlarged, is too contracted to comprehend; and after the reſearch of eternity, ſhall not be fully explored. How dignified in itſelf; how appropriate to every ambaſſador of Jeſus, was that reſolution of the apoſtle—"What things were gain to me;" whatever might ſubſerve my worldly eaſe or intereſt; whatever might promote my reputation as a ſcholar and philoſopher; "theſe I counted loſs for Chriſt." We behold the illuſtrious champion, taking each external advantage, nobly ſacrificing it on the croſs of calvary, and deſiring to glory in *nothing but Jeſus Chriſt, and him crucified.* That ſame miniſtry, which formed the delight, the boaſt, of his own ſoul, he powerfully* preſſed upon

* The obligations impoſed on candidates for the miniſtry in the Epiſcopal church, ſo replete with ſound inſtruction, and ſo pertinent to our preſent purpoſe, cannot be improperly inſerted. "They are required to have always painted on their remembrance, how great a treaſure was committed to their charge; and to apply themſelves, wholly, to this one thing, and to draw all their cares, and ſtudies this way, and to this end; and that by their daily reading and weighing the ſcriptures, they will ſtudy to wax riper and ſtronger in the miniſtry."

Burnet's Paſtoral Care.—Page 89.

Timothy his ſon :—" Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the preſbytery. Meditate on theſe things ; give thyſelf wholly to them ; that thy profiting may appear unto all."

Permit me, reverend Fathers and Brethren, to treſpaſs longer on your patience, by adverting to the high dignity and awful ſolemnity, of this ſtewardſhip, committed to our truſt. How honorable the condition of being workers together with Jehovah, in that moſt ſublime, moſt aſtoniſhing, of his purpoſes, the recovery of a periſhing world! To ſtand as ambaſſadors for the KING of Kings ; and by all the majeſty of his authority, by all the endearments of his grace, entreat ſinners to be reconciled, to believe, and repent, and be ſaved! " The miniſtry of reconciliation is given us." In holy admiration, may not each of us exclaim—Lord, what am I, that I ſhould he thus diſtinguiſhed ; that to me the unſearchable riches ſhould be entruſted! In holy gratitude, may we not adore with the apoſtle, " I thank Chriſt Jeſus our Lord," that, weak as I am, worthleſs as I am, " he hath accounted me faithful ; putting me into the miniſtry :" He hath committed to me that treaſure, by which my own

ſoul may be enriched, and which enriches to immortal glory, all who receive it! That Jehovah ſhould ſave any of our apoſtate race, is a ſubject of wonder; but that he ſhould chooſe one of this race, who is by nature equally guilty, equally polluted, equally abominable, and appoint him the inſtrument of ſalvation to others, is a wonder that ſurpaſſeth: It is a myſtery of ſovereignty, of grace, of condeſcenſion, which excites our gratitude now, and muſt fill all heaven with admiration through eternity. "O, the depth of the riches, both of the wiſdom and knowledge of God! How unſearchable are his judgments, and his ways paſt finding out! For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory forever. Amen."

Again, bear with me, while we reflect on the awful ſolemnity of our office. To us, the ſouls, the precious ſouls of men, are now committed; and at our hands, if indolent or unfaithful, their damnation will finally be charged. Are we duly impreſſed with this all-ſolemn conſideration? Do we occaſionally throw our eyes over our flock, viewing each individual, each man, each woman, under our care, as a truſt committed us of the living God; as a candidate for an immortal deſtiny, either of glory, or of wrath? Are we watching over them, "with prayers and tears, night and day, as

thoſe who muſt give an account; that we may do it with joy and not with grief." Have we been, in no inſtance chargeable, either through indifference or untenderneſs, with the complaint urged againſt the ſhepherds of Iſrael? "Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe with the wool, but ye feed not the flock. The diſeaſed have ye not ſtrengthened; neither have ye healed that which was ſick; neither have ye bound up that which was broken; neither have ye brought again that which was driven away; neither have ye ſought that which was loſt." Are we careful to recommend, by every part of our deportment in private, thoſe doctrines which we announce from the pulpit—"Giving no offence in any thing, that the miniſtry be not blamed; but in all things approving ourſelves as the miniſters of God; in labors, in watchings, by pureneſs, by knowledge, by long-ſuffering, by kindneſs, by the Holy Ghoſt, by love unfeigned, by the word of truth, by the armour of righteouſneſs, upon the right hand and upon the left." If any man neglect the great ſalvation, he ſhall not, he cannot eſcape: But the damnation of the unholy, unprofitable ſervant, muſt be dreadful beyond deſcription. While he is doomed to endure, in his own perſon, that worm which never dies, and thoſe flames which ſhall never be quenched; that worm ſhall be envenomed, thoſe flames infuriated, by the blaſphemies of others, brought to

perdition through his inattention and ſloth. They will be eternally reviling him; gnaſhing their teeth upon him, as chargeable with their deſtruction, by not forewarning them of that place of torment. "O Lord, who is ſufficient for theſe things? O Lord, enter not into judgment with thy ſervant; for in thy ſight ſhall no fleſh be juſtified."

Impreſſed with theſe conſiderations, does it not become us to awake from our ſloth; to throw off every weight, whatever might embarraſs us in diſcharging the duties of our high vocation; to keep every gift, every grace, in conſtant, vigorous exerciſe; to occupy, with unremitting diligence, each moment of our time? Accurſed be that preſent eaſe, which is indulged at the peril of never-ending pain. Let that gain be rejected, as worſe than loſs, which is obtained at the hazard of our own damnation, or the damnation of thoſe committed to our care.—May thoſe moments periſh from the record of our lives, which are waſted in idleneſs, in amuſements, in worldly company, or worldly avocations; while our brethren by nature are ſinking a prey to devouring flames. Let thoſe honors wither in eternal diſgrace, which are ſought in purſuits foreign to our miniſterial profeſſion, while men are *periſhing, for whom Chriſt died;* men who might have eternally adorned his mediatorial crown. By all the value

of our own ſouls; by all the value of the ſouls of others; by the compaſſions of a bleeding Saviour; by the ſolemnities of his ſecond appearing; by the terrors of being *caſt, as unprofitable ſervants, into outer darkneſs*, while others, our inferiors, it may be, in age, and opportunity, and office, are welcomed to the joys of their Lord; let us be rouſed to *preach the word; to remain inſtant, in ſeaſon, and out of ſeaſon; to make full proof of our miniſtry*. The Lord enable us all ſo to run, that we may obtain the prize. May he render us inſtrumental in turning *many to righteouſneſs*; that through the riches of his grace, we may *ſhine as ſtars, and ſuns, in his everlaſting kingdom.*

Called to be a ſteward of the myſteries of God, I conclude, offering them to the reception of the family preſent. By the authority of the great Lord of the houſe, I this moment unlock theſe treaſures, theſe inexhauſtible treaſures, and tender them for the uſe, the enjoyment, of every man, of every woman, in this aſſembly. Art thou in poverty? I preſent thee unſearchable riches. Art thou naked? I offer thee incorruptible clothing; robes of everlaſting righteouſneſs. Art thou in want? I tender thee immortal bread; that bread, of which he who partakes ſhall hunger no more. Art thou in debt, bound over to the curſe of a broken covenant? I announce the jubilee of releaſe:

I offer thee a pardon, written in the blood of God, and ſealed by a triune Jehovah. Art thou unworthy? I am warranted to tender all, of grace, free grace, abſolute grace, unconditional, unmerited grace. All theſe treaſures of the kingdom, precious as they are, coſtly as they were to the eternal ſurety; all theſe treaſures are as free to thee, as the grace of Jehovah can render them, or the lips of Jehovah can pronounce them. Would to God, I could prevail with you to receive them! Would to God, I could perſuade every male, and every female; the bond and the free; the black and the white; the more pure and the more profligate; to draw near, and accept this great ſalvation. "*The Spirit and the Bride ſay, come: Let him that heareth ſay, come: Let him that is athirſt, come; and whoſoever will, let him take the water of life, freely.*" "*We are ambaſſadors for Chriſt; as though God did beſeech you by us; we pray you in Chriſt's ſtead; be ye reconciled to God.*"

Now to Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we can aſk or think; to this Lord Jeſus, who purchaſed, with the eternal Father, who elected, and the ever-bleſſed Spirit, who applies; the Author of all grace in time, and of all glory through eternity; be aſcribed worſhip and adoration, now and everlaſtingly. AMEN.